

OTHER MUSIC IN REVIEW

Rachmaninoff Gives Piano Recital at Carnegie Hall; Rameau Variations Are Among the Features

The sovereign qualities of a great art were never more manifest in their presence and in their effect than when Sergei Rachmaninoff gave his piano recital yesterday afternoon in Carnegie Hall. It is a tribute to him and to the reality of his music that there assembled again in the historic auditorium a great audience of the select, who gave him the closest attention and applauded like the audience of exceptionally intelligent music lovers that they were.

This audience was not constituted of people of fashion on the floor and the people who could only buy the cheapest seats in the house. The audience was a cross-section of the musical public of this city, and it was easy to perceive the discrimination and the immediate response to significant interpretation which characterized the assembly.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's program had some unusual features. After the delightful set of Rameau variations he played a rarely heard Toccata and Fugue in E minor of Bach. This is one of a set of four Bach Toccatas of which Busoni, upon a time, made an edition of his own. Mr. Rachmaninoff dispensed with Busoni's editings in a way which represents a return in the direction of Bach.

Bach Effectively Interpreted

He played the Beethoven sonata which bears the sub-title of "Les adieux" and two Schubert pieces for the first half of his program. One might have glanced casually over the composer's names in this list and have said, "Oh, yes, the customary grouping of a few classic and a few romantic composers. For is not the Beethoven of 'Les adieux' a full-fledged romanticist?" Assuredly, yes, and in this he connects with Schubert. But Bach, as interpreted by Mr. Rachmaninoff, was confoundingly revealed as the arch-romanticist and poet of them all.

On this occasion the musical power of Mr. Rachmaninoff's phrasing revealed itself anew, so that one was struck afresh by his ability to sing melodies on the keyboard, and the manner in which the melodic line was sculptured, as if for all time.

The Bach Toccata was a new experience in its material as well as interpretation. It is a glory of line and color, and even has more than once the implication of harmonic mass and tone-tint. It consists in a free prelude and a fugue, and it is all so spontaneous that the prelude is as a free improvisation and the fugue hardly less of an intimate personal outpouring.

Thus the strict old form becomes purely an expressive vehicle. Often the voice parts, which are of course developed in the contrapuntal way, seem woven together with the intention of a sort of impressionism. The music is then no longer a matter of interweaving harmonic strands, but of lines closely juxtaposed as they might be on a broodery, for the purpose of contrasted hues as well as chord impact and dramatic emphasis.

Probably much of this impression lay in the performance. Without affectation or exaggeration on the one hand, and also without the suspicion of pedantry involving a stiff tempo, Mr. Rachmaninoff conveyed the music. He could do so with the synthesis and the vision which are a master's. There were no lightning feats of virtuosity, no reverberating climaxes, but when it was over applause fairly crashed out over the house and lasted a long time.

Beethoven Sonata Pleasing

When Rachmaninoff played Beethoven's music the power and responsibility of the interpreter were born upon one again. There was the realization that to many musicians these pages of Beethoven are simply a closed book. Only a few players can make them live, and of these few still fewer come near the depth and impressiveness of Mr. Rachmaninoff's achievement. As always occurs when a great artist does something like that, those who listened thought, "Heavens, why was I so slow to realize the wonder of that sonata?" The opening measures—the invocation, and, as it were, the composer's reverie upon the meaning of those fateful words, "Lebwohl, lebwohl"—introduces astonishing developments. The first movement is a rhapsody upon the motto phrase, as represented by the initial motive, and all with all their connotations of apprehension and solitude.

The Tritsan-like measures of the part called "L'Absence," and the wild rejoicings of "Le retour"—these seemed the complete fulfillment and the perfect limitation of all that pertains to the greatest "program music"; rather the record of moods and impressisms, as Beethoven remarked of his own "Pastoral Symphony," than the thought of imitation or realistic suggestion. It took Mr. Rachmaninoff to so completely illuminate the matter.

The perfect contrast and corollary to all this was the delicious music of Schubert; the waywardness, the grace, the nostalgia of the A-flat Impromptu; the tuneful and bewitching rondo from the D-major sonata, wherein Mr. Rachmaninoff, companionship the composer himself, cast aside all solemnities or thoughts of care, and reveled with the innocent.

Here the record of the recital must stop. More fortunate people than the writer heard to the end a program announced as including Rachmaninoff's G-major Prelude, twelve of the Chopin Preludes, two compositions by Liszt. Mr. Rachmaninoff, where New York is concerned, gives too few recitals. O. D.

Giorgio Ciompi Recital

Giorgio Ciompi, young Italian violinist, made his debut yesterday afternoon at Town Hall, playing the Tartini sonata (Didone Abbandonata), the prelude to the Bach E major solo sonata, a rarely heard Mozart concerto in D listed as Kozchel No. 27, the Chausson "Poeme" and a group of shorter pieces. Sanford Schlusel was at the piano.

Mr. Ciompi began his studies in Italy, and continued at the Paris Conservatoire under Jules Boucherit. He is but 20 years old, and the particular influences of his schooling are still strongly evident in his playing, both technically and musically. The Italian influence has stressed a warm lyricism; the French, suavity, elegance and stylistic preciosity. These, at least, are obviously Mr. Ciompi's aspirations,

and his musical nature seems satisfied to express itself by their means. Within the restricted limits of his style, he can shape a neat phrase, etch a vivacious rhythm, and sing sweetly a melody that glistens with the ready tear.

These capacities endowed the Mozart concerto with what was, taken by and large, the best performance of the afternoon. Tartini's sonata lost some of its classic dignity by an almost girlishly soft passion, while the red-blooded passion of Chausson was watered down to sentimentality. A truer pitch and a quieter stance would enhance Mr. Ciompi's chances for success, which are, to judge by yesterday's audience, already considerable.

G. G.

Budapest Quartet Concert

The second concert of the series being presented here this season by the Budapest String Quartet, under the auspices of the League of Music Lovers, was given late yesterday afternoon in Town Hall. Roslyn Tureck, the youthful pianist who won this year's Town Hall Endowment Award, was the assisting artist.

The program, a lengthy and exacting one—consisted of the Schubert quartet in G major, the Hindemith quartet, Op. 22, and the Brahms piano quintet in F minor, Op. 34. All three works rejoiced in performances of the fluent, technically polished kind one has learned to expect from this superior ensemble.

In the Schubert masterpiece—the last, the weightiest and the most difficult of that master's quartets—the Hungarian players met the many challenges of the intricate score with ease. Theirs was a reading which reached greater significance in the more delicate and lyric moments than in pages of a wildly impassioned sort, such as are to be found in the development section of the opening movement or the nightmarish episode of the andante. It was rather in the ethereal, shimmering passages such as that where the first violin sings out its melody of the first theme over the tremolo of the other instruments or in the elfin measures of the scherzo that the interpretation reached its greatest heights, though all of it was poetically and skillfully done.

The repression which marked the playing of the Schubert was again in evidence in the Brahms quintet, especially so in the initial division, which would have benefited by a considerably more enkindling approach. There is a defiance and flaming romanticism in this early creation of the composer and also a tenderness which largely went by the boards in a too restrained account of its content. Miss Tureck played the piano part accurately and with a pleasing quality of tone, but as yet she has not fully mastered the emotional implications of this music.

Hindemith's third quartet, written in 1922, received, strangely enough, considering its relative objectivity, the most vivid and subjective account of the three works offered. And here the tone of the quartet was at its best.

N. S.

Cassado Concert Heard

The Schubert-Cassado Concerto in A for 'cello and orchestra, freely transcribed by Gaspar Cassado from Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata, was introduced to New York last night at Carnegie Hall at the concert of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Joseph Schuster, its first 'cellist, was soloist, and John Barbirolli conducted.

The story behind this work is that although Sir George Grove and possibly one or two other scholars had known of its existence in its original form, Mr. Cassado, who came across it while browsing in the Vienna Musik-Verein, was the first musician to experience any great desire to hear it. So he transferred the part of the obsolete six-stringed arpeggione for the 'cello, added "freely" to the solo part, and augmented the original piano part for a reduced orchestra.

With no knowledge of the virgin score, it is rash to commend or reject Mr. Cassado's abilities as transcriber. This reviewer is willing to take the chance in averring that Mr. Cassado played somewhat too "freely" with the manuscript of the first movement, which in sum was hardly identifiable as Schubert. The adagio more than atoned for preceding disappointments, and the final allegretto was pleasantly tuneful. The work may add nothing to our knowledge of Schubert, and is no great shakes as music, but it can agreeably fill an idle half hour. Mr. Schuster played it very well, with beauty of tone and technique.

The rest of the program consisted of the Schumann Fourth symphony, the Debussy "Berceuse Heroique" and the Beethoven Seventh symphony, which have been heard on Thursday and Friday and reviewed in THE TIMES. G. G.

The Mordkin Ballet

By JOHN MARTIN

The Mordkin Ballet added another work to its repertoire last night when it presented a revival of Dauberval's "La Fille Mal Gardée" at the Majestic Theatre. The old work has not been performed here for a great many years, and apparently the reason for its resurrection now is that the role of the old woman, Marceline, provides Mr. Mordkin with a good comedy part.

Unhappily, this is almost all that can be said for the present revival. If it were played with a full awareness of its period by a company of expert comedians who happened also to be fine dancers, it might conceivably be quaint and funny. As it was performed last night it was neither. Except for Mordkin's zest and a pas de trois by the truly delightful Karen Conrad, Nina Stroganova and Leon Varkas, it was pretty inept. Dimitri Romanoff did what he could with the young lover's role, but Lucia Chase was badly miscast as the ingenue daughter.

The program also contained a repetition of "The Goldfish" with Patricia Bowman in the title role. In the afternoon "Swan Lake," "Trepak" and "Voices of Spring" were given. The engagement will end with two performances today, at the first of which "Griselle" and "The Goldfish" will constitute the bill, and in the evening the program will consist of "Swan Lake," "The Goldfish" and "Voices of Spring."