

Opera Addicts Hear Stars at Benefit Show

BY EDWARD BARRY.

Opera addicts gaped delightedly last night as their favorite singers passed one by one across the stage of the Civic Opera house. The evening was a benefit concert for the Chicago City Opera company, and everybody had a chance to see how the various artists looked in ordinary 1938 dress clothes instead of the exotic costumes in which they are usually encased.

Also participating were the opera orchestra and chorus and the Catherine Littlefield ballet. Dino Bigalli, Angelo Canarutto, and Leo Kopp divided the conducting duties among them.

Annunciata Garrotto, George Czaplinski, Margery Mayer, Eva Turner, Armand Tokatyan, Helen Jepson, Constance Merrell, Jean Fardulli, James Melton, Hilde Reggiani, Carlo Morelli—so runs the catalog of the men and women who sang each a song or two and vanished into the wings. All of the offerings were solos except for the fourth act quartet from "La Boheme" and the "Innegiamo il Signore" from "Cavalleria Rusticana." Virtually all of the music was operatic.

Random notes on a crowded evening:

The tremendous nobility of Mme. Turner's singing of Isoida's Love Death. The confidence with which her voice rode above the chorus in the "Cavalleria" excerpt. The sureness with which Helen Jepson negotiates the dizziest turns of the "Sempre Libera." The richness of the Morelli baritone in the best passages of Rigoletto's "Pari Siamo." The sensuous splendor of Margery Mayer's contralto and the warm way in which she can personalize a phrase.

RACHMANINOFF RECITAL

Sergei Rachmaninoff, Russian pianist who was characterized by a writer in this paper yesterday as a man who believes that heaven is a place where his C-sharp minor Prelude is never heard, got around to this hardy little piece toward 5:30 yesterday afternoon. His performance of it marked the end of the encore group which the enthusiasm of an Orchestra hall audience had compelled him to add to his printed program.

A little earlier Mr. Rachmaninoff had played a Liszt Sonnetto del Petrarca with superb eloquence of phrasing and sonority of tone, and had tossed off the atrociously hard "Venezia e Napoli" of the same composer in a manner so finished that the performance denied the existence of any difficulties.

Still earlier there was a group of twelve Chopin Preludes, of which some [E-minor and B-minor, for instance] were examples of pianism of the most delicate sort and others [E-flat major, B-flat minor] fell considerably this side of a full realization of what we are justified in believing the composer's intention to have been. The lusty performance of the E-flat and the imperfectly articulated delivery of the B-flat minor were worlds away from what we like to believe is the utter featheriness of the first and the granite precision of the second.

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