

BARBIROLI LEADS THE PHILHARMONIC

Returns After Vacation to a
Program Featured by Piano
Work of Rachmaninoff

BEETHOVEN MUSIC HEARD

C Major Concerto Is Offered
by Soloist—'Oberon' by
Weber Initial Item

By HOWARD TAUBMAN

John Barbirolli returned to the podium at the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra's concert at Carnegie Hall last night, bringing to an end his vacation of one week. He had distinguished assistance from Sergei Rachmaninoff, who was the evening's soloist and who was heard in Beethoven's C major concerto, Op. 15. The program began with Weber's "Oberon" overture and for a substantial second half there was Bruckner's Seventh symphony.

It seemed a pity that even a handful of seats were unoccupied for Mr. Rachmaninoff's playing of the early Beethoven concerto. Perhaps the pianist has been heard with orchestra too recently; he appeared with the Philadelphia Orchestra several times last month. Perhaps the C major has not the public appeal of Beethoven's more mature and better known concertos. No matter; Mr. Rachmaninoff gave a delightful performance.

Concerto Is Discussed

The C major concerto, with its flashes of power in the first movement, its flowing and enchanting slow movement and its playful closing rondo, can have a bewitching power if it is played with a grasp of its spirit. Mr. Rachmaninoff gave thrust to the first movement, let the piano sing memorably in the slow movement and made the rhythms and the tone bright in the last. He did not sentimentalize; if anything, his interpretation was rather chaste and severe. But one prefers this to a sugary conception.

Mr. Barbirolli and the orchestra joined the pianist in a skillfully coordinated performance. The conductor apparently let the pianist's conception control. But more than that, he kept the orchestral share within the proper framework—light, graceful, subdued. The audience thundered its applause at the end, and pianist and conductor were recalled for many bows.

The reception of Bruckner's Seventh was another story. At the risk of riling the Brucknerites, it must be reported that there was a considerable exodus at the end of the second movement. They might say that concert-goers are in the habit of leaving early. But not so many at a given moment. To paint the picture fairly, however, it should be emphasized that the majority stayed.

Orchestra Wins Praise

Mr. Barbirolli and his men gave the work an honest and solid performance. The aspiration and integrity of the composer shone through. It was easy to see why the mind of this composer appeals to some contemporaries; it is easier to see why many more people can leave Bruckner alone. The listener must have a mind that is responsive to the shape of Bruckner's thought, to the curve of his themes and to their special treatment.

There are moments, like the adagio of the Seventh, where Bruckner's thought and expression achieve a poignancy and universality that only the titans surpassed. But such moments are not enough to make the work viable for all listeners in our day.

Josef Lhevinne's Program

At the recital given by Josef Lhevinne as the fourth event in this season's Endowment Series, in Town Hall last night, that eminent master of the keyboard performed the various numbers of a most formidable program with breath-taking virtuosity. His supreme command of the resources of the piano was never more amazingly in evidence than in the final group listed, where the recital reached its climax of accomplishment with the unsurpassable readings granted Debussy's "Feux d'artifice" and the "Feux Follets" of Liszt.

The "Feux Follets" was tonally, technically, rhythmically and in every other way, as near perfection as human fingers ever can be expected to deal with its exceedingly tricky measures. Extraordinary ravishment of sound, elfin delicacy and grace, and a bravura that transcended all difficulties as if they were non-existent, combined to make this Lisztian etude the outstanding achievement of an evening of exceptional pianism.

As for Debussy's "Feux d'artifice," that most exacting of the composer's preludes received an interpretation filled with original and individual details that lent unusual effectiveness to the familiar music. Mr. Lhevinne washed in its colors in impressionistic fashion that reminded one of Whistler's manner in his painting of the fireworks seen from Battersea Bridge, a masterpiece that may well have been Debussy's original inspiration for the prelude.

Mr. Lhevinne's negotiation of the two books of the Brahms "Variations on a Theme by Paganini," given by request, did not quite reach the electrical quality of his presentation of the same composition earlier this season here. But from the angle of mechanical control it was as superlative as ever under his impeccable fingers, and hardly to be surpassed in the ethereal lightness of touch and velvetiness of tone. It brought on the biggest demonstration of any of the evening's offerings.

The program began with Beethoven's "Les Adieux" sonata, which, like the Chopin "Barcarolle" and "Ballade" in F minor, did not find Mr. Lhevinne in a particularly intense mood as interpreter. But the Chopin Valse in A flat, Op. 64, No. 3, in this group was a match in charm of treatment to the Liszt "Premiere Valse Oubliee" later in a generous schedule which also included the latter composer's "La Campanella" and Debussy's "La Soirée dans Grenade." N. S.

Glenn Darwin Gives Recital

Glenn Darwin, baritone, gave his first local recital yesterday afternoon at Town Hall. He studied at the Eastman and Juilliard Music Schools, has often sung over the radio, and took the part of Aaron Bior in the Metropolitan Opera

performances of Damrosch's "The Man Without a Country."

Mr. Darwin has one of the most attractive voices of the season's debutantes. It is large and round and has a healthy, reassuring resonance. Its low tones are not powerful, but have the substance that suggests a bass-baritone. The upper range retains its quality except for a few flaws of production that should not be irremediable.

If Mr. Darwin's musicianship is neither intuitively keen nor completely matured, it is, on the other hand, more than normally intelligent and careful in its regard for the things of his art that can be learned. In a program of Handel, Brahms, Strauss, Verdi and others, Mr. Darwin sang with varying success within the same work, bringing real feeling and nice phrasing to some measures and passing over others with no more than external fitness of expression. In short, he is a young singer who has still to complete the promise of his fine gifts.

Edwin McArthur was an erratic accompanist. G. G.