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Leopold Auer's Birthday Concert

By JULIA HOYT

NEW YORK, May 16.—A couple of weeks ago I spent an evening which was one of the most thrilling I have ever experienced. It was the evening which was chosen by Efram Zimbalist and Joscha Heifetz for the concert to honor Leopold Auer, their teacher, on his 80th birthday. As a matter of fact, Mr. Auer's birthday is June 7, but as many of the artists and their followers will have left for other parts of the world by that time, they decided to celebrate it earlier.

I went to Carnegie hall knowing that, with the artists who were going to take part, it could not be other than a wonderful evening, but I did not realize how curiously thrilling, in fact exciting and moving, it would be. When Auer, a strange looking little old man, completely bald but with a beard, and wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, walked on the stage with Zimbalist and Heifetz on either side of him, there was something in the picture that to me was very moving. The huge audience rose to its feet and gave him an ovation lasting at least three or four minutes. Heifetz and Zimbalist, looking absurdly young beside him, banged their bows on their violins and smiled in a proud, and at the same time protective way. When the applause finally died down the never-to-be-forgotten concert started with a trio played by Auer and his two star pupils.

For the information of those who have not seen other accounts of the concert, I will give the list of artists. After the trio came Zimbalist accompanied by Ossip Gabrilowitsch, then Professor Auer accompanied by Serge Rachmaninoff. Next came Heifetz accompanied by Zimbalist, Josef Hofman alone at the piano, and, finally, a duet by Zimbalist and Heifetz. It is easy to see that even had the reason for the occasion been a less moving one, the list of artists alone was enormously exciting.

It is understandable that Zimbalist and Heifetz would feel the urge to pay their respects to Professor Auer, but to me it is quite splendid how great artists who, personally speaking, owe him nothing, gladly turned out to pay him respect. To see Rach-

maninoff playing the simplest accompaniments with as much care and interest as he has ever given to his own concerts was an appealing sight. To see Gabrilowitsch turning the pages for him and, afterwards, rendering the same service for Zimbalist, was entertaining as well as appealing.

I have always heard of the great jealousy existing among artists. Certainly the other night disproved that statement as far as these artists are concerned. Particularly is this so in the case of Zimbalist and Heifetz. Here are two young violinists who might conceivably have some feeling of competition. One had only to listen to them in their duet to see how each had no thought of trying to outplay the other, to know that no such feeling exists between them.

Professor Auer has done a great deal for music. He has not only been a great violinist himself, but is known as the teacher of almost every great violinist alive today. I must confess to having been a little worried before Mr. Auer's solo. He had already played a difficult trio and, after all, 80 years is pretty old to go through such an experience as that evening must have been for him. But I need not have worried. His tone is, undoubtedly not quite as full as in years gone by, but it is beautiful; his bowing is perhaps not quite as certain, but his pitch is sure; and his great artistry, his musical knowledge and feeling are all there, and one could feel nothing but respect and admiration for him.

At the close of the concert the audience quite naturally called for Auer, and the announcement was made that he was much fatigued and had left the hall. I afterwards heard that the people back stage had been worried by his exhaustion after his solo. However when they arrived for supper at his house he not only had recovered sufficiently to be there to greet them, but insisted on staying up until 3 in the morning and, as one guest expressed it, "he had more pep than any of us."

It was a memorable evening, and one which will certainly not soon, if ever again, be duplicated.