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The Concertgoer

*A Magazine For The
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Rachmaninoff
Thursday, Nov. 5
1931

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Season 1931-32

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Program Continued on Page 18

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PROGRAM NOTES

By Florence Hyde

1. Sonate, Opus 81 Beethoven
(*Les Adieux—l'Absence—le Retour*)

This Sonate was composed in the stirring interval of the Franco-Prussian war, when Beethoven was living in Vienna—about midway of his musical career.

Napoleon entered Vienna with his French troops on May 4th, 1809 and the Archduke Rudolph departed. On that very day, Beethoven began this *sonata* commemorating the event, and among the sketches for the *Adieux*, in his own handwriting, is this inscription in German: "The departure on the 4th day of May, dedicated and written from the heart," thus proving what really inspired the composition. The other two sections, The Absence and The Return, were completed the following year and the whole published in 1810. The original manuscript is in the Royal Library, Berlin.

The first movement, *Les Adieux*, passes from a characteristic Beethoven *adagio* into a spirited *allegro*; even in farewell, the composer anticipates a happy return. The second interval, *l'Absence*, is *andante espressivo* "with increasing agitation, but expressively," interpreting the feelings of both the absent Archduke and the subjects who await his return. The third, *le Retour*, with time strongly marked, most vivaciously expresses joy in the Archduke's return. The whole composition is remarkable for beauty, romance and ingenuity.

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2. a. Gavotte
- b. Momento Capriccioso

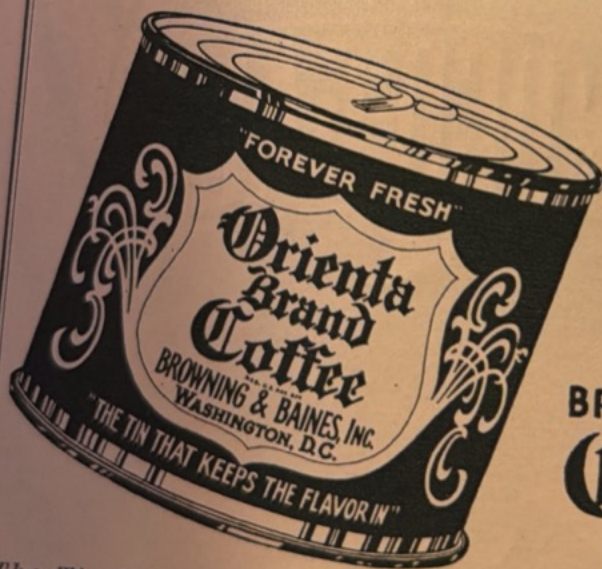
Gluck-Pauer
C. M. Weber

Although Gluck was a favorite at the Viennese court because of his beautiful music, contemporary musicians resenting his innovations which made opera a new and dramatic medium, criticised him so severely that, while convinced of the soundness of his ideas, he decided to find a new field. There was in Vienna an attache of the French embassy who accepted Gluck's ideas and believed in him, and together, they made a search for proper drama and agreed upon Racine's "Iphigenia" as a most promising story for musical setting. So "Iphigenia en Aulide" was written in 1772 and produced in Paris at l'Opera, two years later.

Gluck did everything to ensure its success. He freely stated his own ideas, used every avenue of publicity possible in his day, presented "tributes of respect" to Rousseau and wrote letters to other authors whose good will would help. No stone was left unturned but it was the patronage of his ex-pupil, Marie Antoinette, that really got his work produced because his presence in France had aroused hostility and musicians, particularly, wanted to keep him out of the French Academy.

The presentation of "Iphigenia en Aulide" marked the beginning of a new era of opera in France. The old Greek story gave no opportunity for political interpretations and from the opening voice of "The Oracle" in the overture to the last aria—there was a remarkable number of arias—the music was bril-

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liant and alluring. The opera was a complete success, and Marie Antoinette gave Gluck a pension of 6000 francs (about \$1,500) and promised him an equal sum for every new work he should create for the French stage.

She wrote to her sister about him and called her old singing teacher "Our dear Gluck," so France gave him the recognition that Austria denied.

Ernst Pauer, an able German pianist who died in 1905 and was famous for his list of the twelve greatest pianists of the middle nineteenth century (in which he included three women) made this arrangement of the Gavotte from "Iphigenia en Aulide", one of the most frequently heard of Gluck's shorter numbers.

The Momento Capriccioso was written by Weber while music master to the children of Duke Ludwig of Stuttgart, about 1808. Danzi, kappellmeister of Stuttgart at that time, a much older man, became Weber's friend and was of great service to the composer though he also introduced him to the Court Theatre group, into whose bohemian life Weber entered so entirely that he cut himself off from finer and more cultured people. One singer particularly, Margarethe Lang, so absorbed him for a time that he committed all sorts of follies.

King Frederic did not approve of his brother Duke Ludwig's extravagances and lively friends and he singled out Weber for particular abuse whenever possible. Weber retaliated with petty revenges, and one day, when he had just left the cabinet after a particular stormy scene, he met an old woman



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in the corridor who asked the way to the laundress's quarters. Weber pointed to the King's apartments, and when the frightened woman was ejected, she said the young man who had just left the room had directed her there.

King Frederic was furious and had Weber arrested but the Duke begged him off though the King did not forget the affront and after a series of discreditable affairs in which the Duke and Weber were involved, banished both Weber and his father. Weber had the good sense to realize that it was all the result of his own folly, and settled down to conscientious hard work.

The Momento Capriccioso was connected with the singer Lang, if not originally dedicated to her. It is a true caprice, a musical interval guided by the whimsical moods of the moment.

3. Etudes Symphonique

Schumann

"In the form of variations" this theme with twelve variations would entitle Schumann to stand with the greatest piano composers even if he had written nothing else for that instrument. His wealth of ideas and the wonderful bravura passages make the name "Variations" only a technical description.

The beginning of the theme is taken from Marscheners' "Templer und Juden" ("Du stolzes England, freue dich") and was a subtle way of complimenting the English composer in honor of William Sterndale Bennet to whom the whole composition is dedicated. The Variations seem to climax in the twelfth which is notable for brilliance in form.

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Early composers had to resort to some method of amplifying and lengthening their works without losing interest, and the only way to do this was by repetition, though disguising the repetition by musical device, hence variations. This form found its consummation at Beethoven's hands, and succeeding composers contributed interesting individual examples of which Schumann's Etudes Symphoniques are among the finest—remarkable for their freedom in structural form and his warm romantic versions of the theme as he works up his figures into movements equal to the theme itself.

4. Variations sur un Theme de Corelli.....Rachmaninoff
(First Performance)

Corelli, the great Italian composer and violinist, has provided inspiration in his works for all succeeding musicians. During his lifetime he reached the front rank of fame and popularity in Rome; he had friends like Handel and Scarlatti; but was so simple, unpretentious and amiable that he seems to have escaped the rivalry and turmoil which beset more temperamental composers, despite the real reforms he sponsored.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's composition invades all fields—orchestra, pianoforte, strings, voice and opera—and Washington is honored to hear the first public performance of this set of variations on a Corelli theme. In his threefold capacity of pianist, composer and conductor, Rachmaninoff brings the widest knowledge and musicianship to his compositions, so that each new work from his pen is received with the greatest interest.

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5. Etude Transcendante (Heroica)

Liszt

This "study"—the seventh of twelve *Etudes d'execution transcendante*—demands the greatest brilliancy of technique and musicianship, and is program music of the most Lisztian type, in which the appeal is to the feelings and what Hunneker calls "nerves." This set of etudes was dedicated to Czerny "with the gratitude and respectful affection of his pupil," and the original copy was even more difficult than the final.

The various changes in these etudes might represent the history of piano playing in the last half of the nineteenth century, including the evolution of concert grand pianos. Schumann said that several of the studies were possible for "ten, or twelve at most, players in the world," though they appeal to and stimulate all musical intelligence.

6. Tarantella, Venezia e Napoli

Liszt

In 1859, Liszt gave up his position at the Weimar opera, and went to Rome, making that city his headquarters during several years of travel. The result was three suites or "Annees de Pelerinage." The second of these suites was devoted to Italy and the *Tarantella* comes as one of the divisions under Venezia e Napoli, which the superscription says was composed after reading Dante. The three divisions are (1) Gondoliera, (2) Canzone and (3) Tarantella, founded on the dance supposed to cure victims of the bite of the deadly tarantula.

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