

An Aftermath, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Fortune Gallo—Those Who Have Manifold Gifts.

By HARVEY B. GAUL.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the lion hearted pianist with the lumbering gait of the Russian bear, has come and gone, and we are still gasping over his performance with our ears ringing and our senses titillating.

Josef Hofmann, in speaking of him, says, "Yet behind the gentle man there crops out at times the playful deviltry of a giant." He is right. There was in that immobile face and crouching body a suggestion of latent deviltry that might assume gigantic proportions under certain conditions, and assuredly there was in his playing a feeling of leprechauns and circauns and suppressed desires in general. It was not all terrible intensivity. Of all the players who have come here there is no one that sharpens the musical contours and limns out the phrase the way Rachmaninoff does, unless it is Harold Bauer. With both of these men melodic clearness comes next to godliness. The one thing that differentiates Rachmaninoff from Bauer is his admirable staccato. In his staccato he has the different modifications of release and accented release.

It was a fascinating lesson in pedaling to watch Rachmaninoff's use of his feet. He phrased with the pedals—it was not just pushing the pedal down for a bar; it was often a pedal for a chord, and it made no difference how fast and often the chords came. There are other pianists who can pedal, to wit, Ossip Gabrilowitch, but there is not one who does it with the great intelligence that Rachmaninoff employs.

It was good to hear him play Beethoven again, and to recall what Berlioz said of him. Berlioz remarked that in Beethoven "music is at once the product of feeling and knowledge." In the Rachmaninoff-Beethoven combination we witnessed the perfect union of feeling and knowledge. The "Adagio" as played through the Rachmaninoff spectrum was a lovely piece of lusingando. It showed that Rachmaninoff not only has the strongest wrists in all pianodom, but he has one of the smoothest of clinging touches.

Rachmaninoff in a recent review, says, "Futurism is a kind of fungus growth, with little solidity to withstand the test of time." His belief was attested in his own compositions; they were modern, and they certainly were solid; solid not only in theme, but development, and they were quite free from the exotic fungus unhealthiness. As to their ability to "withstand the test of time," only the years can tell. Anyway, they were absolutely free from crazy cubism and the insane vortex of undefinable "impressionism." In both his "Etudes Tableau" he wrote with a definite pattern and a logical working out of that pattern. Of all the welter of modern piano pieces—Leo Ornstein and the followers of the Gertrude Steins' "Tender Buttons" school of abbreviations, please note—Rachmaninoff was able to give us in the "Etude Tableau" modern writing and modern harmonization that was pleasurable to hear.

It is to be hoped that Rachmaninoff will be an annual event. It is said that he has at his fingers' ends many programs. Next year it would be wonderful to hear him in a Russian-Chopin program.

panies play. He knows what Detroit likes Pittsburgh will probably stay away from, and what Pittsburgh likes, will "stand 'em up" in Washington. He also knows how to get singers and hang on to them, who know the routine of opera and all the traditions. If he chooses new singers he selects—with one eye to the windward—those who are "comers" or "finds," and he gets them with a long contract, and to Gallo's credit, every one of his singers is loyal and earnest in his work, and knows not the word defection. If the San Carlo people have temperament, and being Latins, they are probably surcharged with it, they keep it to themselves, and take it out in singing. That is one way they differ from the casts of the Metropolitan and Chicago companies, who take out their temperament on the public.

The San Carlo roster of singers contains many of the old names that we have almost grown up with, and several new ones. There is Queena Mario, coloratura, and one of the best sopranos on any stage. She has voice and personal magnetism. She may not be quite a Galli-Curci, but she is a superb mistress of her art.

First among the men comes Manuel Salazar, Spanish tenor, a singer with personality and ringing voice. As tenors go, he was most satisfactory; this may also be said of Giuseppe Agostini. Then there was De Biasi, and that invaluable Naudie Cervi. There are few things in the operatic heaven and earth that are not included in the Cervi philosophy. The one new man who stands out is Vincenzo Banister, baritone. He is in possession of a voice as smooth as velvet; while it is not a large one it is of delightful quality. This man can act as well as sing, and he is an acquisition that does honor to any organization.

Among the women Bula Ray Shull, the West Virginian, is, according to Florent Gibson, a girl of great promise. Stella De Mette and Alice Homer we are familiar with; their rich contraltos were as warm as an Indian summer sun. Maru Onuki, who sang the title role in "Madame Butterfly," created a favorable impression with her voice and stage deportment. While the feminine contingent of the Gallo forces is excellent, it is to the masculine department that all the honors go. Almost without exception the men are artists.

Among the works sung this year the outstanding opera was Verdi's "La Forza Del Destino" with its Spanish subject and Italian treatment. This tragic opera was given for the first time in Pittsburgh and has for its chief theme, assassins, murder and sudden death. Indeed, someone said they simply had to ring the curtain down on the last act because everyone was dead, and there was not a soul left standing to carry on the singing. Gaetano Mercola worked his cast, chorus and orchestra hard for the Pittsburgh performance. It is said he rehearsed them for 12 hours running. That our city from Braddock to Larimer avenue responded may be estimated by the fact that the audience stampeded the entrance, what is known as "rushing the gate" so that hundreds of people got in before the coroner was called to examine the remains.

As to the merits of "La Forza Del Destino," authorities and the Italian