

CRITICAL and

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MUSICAL  
DIARY

Saturday, Feb. 5—A remarkable violin virtuoso made his debut at Carnegie Hall in the afternoon. His name is Ricardo Odnoposoff, he hails from the Argentine, and he has toured widely but never in the U. S. His tone is as large, rich and secure as any I have ever heard; he has a technique that even today, when technical mastery is taken for granted, raises the listener's hair; and he plays with the fire and assurance of, say, Kubelik in his prime. One could quarrel with some of the touches of sentimentalizing in the Franck Sonata, and the implicit cross-rhythms in the presto of the Bach G-minor unaccompanied were hardly suggested. Yet I have never heard the fugue of that sonata sound so full and organ-like without the suggestion of a scratch, while the Paganini D-major Concerto had passages in tenths, octaves and thirds that could never have sounded so brilliant if they had not been impeccably in tune. In the final group, particularly the Sarasate *Caprice Basque*, further astonishing technical feats abounded.

So large and full is the violinist's tone, that his experienced accompanist, Franz Rupp, had to resort to banging every once in a while to balance tones properly. It would be good to hear Mr. Odnoposoff with full orchestra.

In the evening the Harmony Guild of New York presented Zoltan Fekete conducting some 35 members of the NBC Symphony in a very oddly assorted program. There was a suite from Handel's *Alceste* arranged by the conductor, Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and the premiere of a Haydn Symphony interspersed with works by the contemporary Johan Franco. Of the three Franco works, the most ambitious was a *Concerto Lirico* for violin and chamber orchestra ably performed by Ralph Hollander. It is based, said the program notes, on "a highly evolved harmonical structure," and while it sounded as though it might look very interesting on paper—particularly as the form is clear, simple and conventional—it sounded unpleasantly dry and consistently dissonant in what is already a modern form of being old hat.

The *Kindertotenlieder* were bravely sung by Jane Snow, batting at 36 hours notice for Enid Szanthe, and she was more at home in Mr. Franco's setting of some prophetic lines from *Locksley Hall*. Mr. Fekete's Handel Suite showed, as he claimed, some unfamiliar and remarkably modern-sounding Handel. Some of that effect, however, came from Mr. Fekete's very un-Handelian scoring.

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Sunday—At the City Center, Elie Siegmeister's American Ballad Singers demonstrated once more that we have a large, entertaining and musical heritage of folk songs. His arrangements are almost uniformly effective—much more so than his piano arrangements for his anthology, *A Treasury Of American Song*. The program stressed too much the cuter side of things, and it seemed strange for an old liberal like Siegmeister to admit cutie-pie treatments of underpaid Irish and Negro workers on railroads and plan-

Rheingold.

tations. That he could treat serious themes with a moving beauty was shown in *Poor Wayfaring Stranger* and *Upon the Mountain*, an Alabama share-cropper melody.

After C. F. Kettering had told the NBC Symphony's audience about the invention of pneumatic tires, the stage was still not quite set for the reception of the premiere of Arnold Schonberg's Piano Concerto with Edward Steuermann as soloist. Leopold Stokowski added that this music might sound strange but he had studied it for months and was convinced it is a landmark in musical history. To me, who had had no opportunity to study it at all, its scraps of tunes, its parallel thirds and sixths and some of its rhythms sounded like nostalgia for Old Vienna. But its harmonic structure and orchestration made it sound as though many of the pegs, valves, pistons and pedals of the orchestral instruments had become discombobulated. Stokowski may, of course, be right; but how many musicians—let alone laymen—are going to spend the months of study necessary to arrive at the conclusion that such ugliness of sound is really an important contribution to our music.—HENRY SIMON



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