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**Rivals Rachma Ninoff**

**Richter: A Sensation**

A more highly heralded and enthusiastically awaited performer than Sviatoslav Richter has not been heard in this country within the memory of most of us. Almost unbelievable reports of this “living legend” have been filtering out of the Soviet Union for years, giving us a picture of a shy, unassuming, but unprecedentedly talented young man. And the small procession of Richter’s records issuing from behind the Iron Curtain seemed to confirm the fact that a genuinely great artist had arisen in the Soviet Union. One can then easily imagine the tenseness and excitement with which the capacity audience at Symphony Hall Tuesday, November 1, greeted Richter, appearing with the Boston Symphony on his first tour of this country.

Richter did not disappoint anyone. Entering almost nonchalance after the long introduction to the Beethoven First Piano Concerto, he was soon producing the long, singing lines and subtle coloristic effects that are the hallmarks of his playing. Since Richter’s playing is completely effortless and free from unnecessarily mannerisms, it is impossible to analyze exactly the secret of his greatness, but it is equally impossible to deny that greatness. In his hands, the early Beethoven work stood as a worthy companion to the exalted Fourth and powerful “Emperor” Concertos.

The Brahms Second Piano Concerto may well be the most difficult in the repertoire of this instrument. There could be no greater proof, then, of Richter’s greatness than the almost miraculous account of this huge work that emerged from his hands. Richter plays octaves with more facility and finesse than other pianists play scales; and, having abolished technical difficulties, he could concentrate entirely on revealing Brahms’ vision unscathed. When one looks around for a comparison, only one figure of recent times comes to mind; Rachmaninoff, who in the completeness of his technical mastery, eminently musical rubato, and integrity of his concept was the equal of Richter. I lost count of the number of curtain calls demanded of Richter at the concert’s end by the delirious audience, but I doubt that anyone has received more, and deserved them better, than Richter.

In closing, it would only be fair to add that Richter would surely not have made quite the impression he did had not the Boston Symphony under Charles Munch been at its absolute best, which is saying a lot. The concert opener, Beethoven’s “Prometheus” Overture, was very fast and very good. Richter made the most of music in which the foundation is a remarkable account of this huge work that emerged from his hands. Richter was host to the Opera Group Company production of La Traviata next Wednesday and Thursday of next week. It is the last weekend of “Five Finger Exercise” at the Colonial. Jessica Tandy’s acting, John Gielgud’s direction, and Peter Shaffer’s writing earned this one an award from the N.Y. Drama Critics Circle.

Monday “All The Way Home”, Tad Mosel’s adaptation of T. *A* *s* *h* *T* *r* *y* *F* *i* *n* *a* *n* *c* *e* *s* *H* *o* *u* *s* e *s*, moves into the Colonial. The book was good.

Tuesday night, Symphony Hall will probably resound with laughter. Victor Borge, the least melancholy Dane around, will present “Comedy with Music.”

The Tufa people are at it again. Tomorrow, Saturday, and next weekend, they are reading from “The Diary of Ann Frank”. Should be worthwhile if you’re Medford-bound.

Bagpipe fans, if such exist, and lovers of pageant in general will enjoy The Coldstream Guards and Cameron Highlanders Band at Boston Garden, tomorrow and Saturday. Our island allies seem to be masters at the art of foot-stomping.

I Solisit Di Zagreb, chamber music group extraordinaire, will appear at Symphony Hall Sunday. Antonio Janigro will conduct.

Donnelly Memorial Theatre will be the host to the Opera Group Company production of La Traviata next Wednesday and Friday.

B.U. will also present an opera this week. “The Rape of Lucretia” by Benjamin Britten will be shown Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of next week.