
SCHNABEL BEGINS BEETHOVEN CYCLE

Will Present 32 Piano Works
on Successive Wednesdays
at Carnegie Hall.

LARGE HOUSE GREETES HIM

Many Follow His Interpretation
of Sonatas With Scores,
Reading Note by Note.

By OLIN DOWNES.

Artur Schnabel last night in Carnegie Hall returned to his large New York public when he gave the first of a series of seven programs which will offer all the thirty-two Beethoven piano recitals, on consecutive Wednesday evenings. Mr. Schnabel's public is not only a substantial but a distinguished one. In the majority it consists of musicians and students and those music lovers of the city who go to concerts with more than superficial entertainment in mind. A great many in the audience had scores on their knees, and they followed every note of the interpretations.

Again there was reason to marvel at the perfect proportion, the depth of thought and the genuineness of feeling that Mr. Schnabel conveyed. His is an art that recognizes at the same time the grand line and the most significant finish of detail. His interpretive purpose is true and unostentatious as his manner on the platform. He appears with utmost simplicity and sits down with equal simplicity to play.

The performance is complete concentration upon the music, which is projected with extraordinary significance. As each sonata of the thirty-two is a different world in itself, so does the treatment of each one vary in accordance with the nature of the music and the period that it represents in the evolution of Beethoven's thought. Neither for eye nor ear are there gymnastics. Everything is done with the minimum of effort and the maximum of result. For the observer Mr. Schnabel might be any quiet gentleman with a fondness for Beethoven's music who sat down before a circle of intimates to communicate some of his own pleasure.

In the wide spaces of Carnegie Hall he establishes this communication; and never, so to speak, by raising the piano's voice. It is unnecessary for him to do so. The tone carries; the musical thought carries, and this by means of a very finely adjusted scale of values. There is a remarkable degree of difference between chords "mezzo-piano" and "piano," between the dynamic value of each note of a short expressive phrase. There are equally subtle gradations of tempo—witness the last appearance of the theme of the slow movement of the so-called "Pastoral" sonata—not that the work was so nicknamed on Mr. Schnabel's program.

Some would consider this playing unemotional, and it is true that last night Mr. Schnabel was, by comparison with other performances he has given here, in an uncommonly objective vein. He seemed to say, "This is Beethoven's sonata. So far as I have been able to discover in a lifetime of study, it is precisely as Beethoven wanted it to sound. If you can show me where I can more precisely approximate his purpose I will be greatly obliged for the suggestion. My authority is Beethoven's score which I have examined in all the existing manuscript and printed version, of which my own edition states my conclusions. They are as follows:

"And forthwith, in succession, the D major sonata, Opus 28; the late sonata, perhaps the most mysterious of the whole set, in A flat, Op. 110, ending with the fugue; the first sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1, of the set that Beethoven published as available for either piano or harpsichord; and finally, the sonata in G major, Op. 31, No. 1."

Each of these sonatas, as we have observed, had its special style. The tranquillity of the first made a particularly felicitous prelude to the demoniac and mystical rhapsody of the Opus 110, wherein Beethoven dreamed dreams and saw visions. The first sonata was performed with the fullest realization of its prophetic character, but without forcing this note. For the slow movement was sung with an immaculate cantilena and a legato that it would be hard to conceive as issuing from the harpsichord, yet with a Mozartian grace and simplicity of accent. The finale was more than a premonition of the Beethoven to come, and indeed of the course of the romantic movement in piano music.

The audience was attentive to every note. The occasion was testimony to Mr. Schnabel's established reputation and his power as a musician. There was long applause after each sonata. It was evident that this series will meet with the patronage and appreciation that it deserves.