

PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA DROVE ROSA RAISA TO VOCAL CAREER

"Pogrom" in Her Native Village Impelled Her to Escape to Naples, Where an Opera-Loving Family Befriended Her and Discovered Her Gifts as Singer—Artist Brought Out by Campanini as "World's Youngest Dramatic Soprano"

IT is a giant stride from the cellar of a mean dwelling in the pogrom-swept Russian village of Bielostok to the center of the stages of some of the most important opera houses. But once again fact puts fiction to blush. After the hardest rigors and adversities Rosa Raisa, known chiefly to American music lovers through her work with the Chicago Opera Company, has been permitted to taste some of the sweetest artistic victories.

The young dramatic soprano was born and bred in Bielostok, which is one of the numerous smaller villages of Russia. One day came the dreaded pogrom, belching death and the most heartless tortures. Miss Raisa with her niece, a little child of six months, sought refuge in the cellar of her abode, where she cowered with trembling hand tight over the young one's lips to prevent its wailing and thus apprising the inflamed crew above of their whereabouts.

The outcome was that Miss Raisa (she herself was fourteen at the time) was obliged to quit Russia within six hours. She left her country in company with a cousin and went to Naples, where she was befriended by a family. The young girl used to sing those sad little songs which flower so perfectly in Russian soil. The family with whom she was staying were, like most Neapolitans, intelligent lovers of music, and quickly marked the unusual quality of voice that expressed these folksongs. An appointment was

made with the famous master, Lombardi, and with representatives of the Casa Ricordi, who, after hearing Miss Raisa sing, advised her to go to the conservatory. Before long Miss Raisa was installed at Saint Pietro a Majella, where she studied under the noted Mme. Barbara Marchisio, who was her first and only teacher.

Discovered by Campanini

Miss Raisa was virtually discovered, however, by Cleofonte Campanini, and her debut transpired in Parma on Sept. 6, 1913, the time of the Verdi Centenary. She appeared in the master's early opera, "Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio." From that time to this she has appeared regularly on the stages of many of the most important operatic institutions. She was heard in London at Covent Garden the following year, 1914, which year also witnessed her creation of the title rôle of Zandonai's "Francesca da Rimini." This was a signal honor, especially in view of the fact that she enacted the part for the first time on any stage at the personal requests of both the composer and Tito Ricordi. That was while Miss Raisa was singing at the Constanzi, Rome. She sang there for two seasons, appearing during 1915 at the Colon (Buenos Aires). In 1916 "Francesca da Rimini" was heard for the first time at La Scala in Milan, with Miss Raisa again in the principal part. At that hallowed operatic institution she sang in the "Battle of Legnano," the patriotic opera given in honor of Gabriele d'Annunzio.

The same season Miss Raisa sang

again at the Colon and was heard also at Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Sao Paulo, Brazil. She was then engaged for the Chicago Opera Company by Campanini, effecting her debut in "Aida." Mme. Raisa has been requested to sing in



Rosa Raisa, Gifted Young Dramatic Soprano, of the Chicago Opera

Monte Carlo, Spain and Italy after completing her contract at Chicago.

Stage Dust as Perfume to Her

The prima donna—incidentally it might be remarked that she is the youngest living dramatic soprano—loves her art passionately. As she puts it, "the stage's dust is perfume" to her. Springing from humble stock, Miss Raisa has

never forgotten the harrowing experiences which she has lived through, nor does she forget or neglect the poor and unfortunate. This despite successes and compliments heady enough to affect really generous and finely grained mentalities.

An extraordinary honor was conferred upon her when she was singing at La Scala, in the shape of an enthusiastic telegram from the Duke of Pistoia, cousin of the Italian King, expressing the pleasure felt by the Royal Family over Miss Raisa's splendid work. It is said that when the soprano appeared in Buenos Aires, the president of the Argentine Republic, Señor Vittorina del Plaza, never missed a performance. He honored the soprano with a dinner and presented her with a valuable token in appreciation of the pleasure which he derived from her singing.

When Raisa left Bielostok as a girl her father was still alive, but since the outbreak of the war he has disappeared. In spite of thorough investigation not only by influential Italians but by the Pope himself her father's disappearance remains unsolved.

The soprano has created, besides *Francesca* (which she has already sung fifty-five times), the chief rôles in Romani's "Fedora" and the Brazilian Nepomuceno's "Abul." The following list gives an idea of the ambitious scope of Mme. Raisa's repertoire:

"Aida," "Nozze di Figaro," "Ballo in Maschera," "Les Huguenots," "Bohème," "Cavalleria," "Loreley," "Falstaff," "Mefistofele," "Andrea Chenier" and the operas mentioned above. Miss Raisa owes a deep debt of gratitude not only to Cleofonte Campanini, who brought her out in Parma, but also to that distinguished Italian's wife. The latter has been consistently interested in and devoted to the young prima donna and has aided her in many ways. G. V.

Prof. Daniel Gregory Mason of Columbia University, New York, has accepted the invitation of the University of California, at Berkeley, to become a member of the faculty for the next summer session, from June 25 to Aug. 4.



Photo by Matzene

RUDOLPH

GANZ

ANOTHER TRIUMPH AT HIS SECOND NEW YORK RECITAL

POST

N. Y. Evening Post, Nov. 15, 1916: "MacDowell's music is coming into its own. Pianists have discovered him, and the result is that his name is appearing on many programmes this year. It would be well for the cause of his music if all performers played his works as admirably as Rudolph Ganz did at his Aeolian Hall recital yesterday afternoon. He gave the 'Eroica' sonata as his opening number and he not only gave it with MacDowell's warmth and force, bringing out tellingly the poignancy of our greatest American composer's characteristic harmonies, but, what is far more difficult and what few have grasped, he gets the elusive, tender beauty which lies in all MacDowell's compositions, but which escapes as easily as does a subtle fragrance, if sympathy and comprehension are lacking. It is rare to hear in public so intimate a study of another man's soul as Mr. Ganz laid bare yesterday afternoon. This is true missionary work of the highest order."

EVENING WORLD

N. Y. Evening World, Nov. 15: "Among the pianists who compel attention and command respect, not the least is Rudolph Ganz. His recital at Aeolian Hall yesterday afternoon delighted a large audience. To MacDowell's 'Sonata Eroica' he gave a sympathetic, illuminating and masterful exposition. His pronouncement of Chopin's sonata in B minor was a delight. Moussorgski's 'Children's Pranks,' and Bartok's 'Bear Dance,' that upset the risibilities of everybody, owed no little to his skill in delineation. It was stunning playing that he did in Liszt's 'Rakoczy' march that was intended to send us all home but didn't. The cormorants were demanding still more when I left."

EVENING SUN

N. Y. Evening Sun, Nov. 15, 1916: "Ripe artist and, like the Swiss navy, firing no cannon salutes in his own name, Rudolph Ganz won golden opinions from a full Aeolian matinee by asking that house to 'see America first' yesterday in the 'Sonata Eroica' of MacDowell. He followed it up with the Schumann 'Symphonic Studies,' the Chopin B minor sonata and pieces of Stojowski, Moussorgsky, Bartok and Liszt. No long hair, no agonies at the piano when Ganz plays; just the artist and the gentleman, with a touch of the age of chivalry in his devotion to ideals. He's one man in a hundred this year."

TRIBUNE

N. Y. Tribune, Nov. 15, 1916: "Rudolph Ganz is a pianist who always gives of his best, and whose best is very good indeed. He was especially admirable in the MacDowell sonata of which he gave a brilliant reading. It was pianoforte playing of a high order, virile, vibrant, and shot through with color. The Schumann études are not easy compositions, for they require both technical mastery and a great variety of mood. To the first the pianist was entirely equal and his interpretation was at times exceedingly fine, while at others there was a feeling that he did not quite realize its highest possibilities. Yet, taken as a whole, it would be a cavalier indeed who would undertake to belittle Mr. Ganz's achievement. "Concluding the programme was a group of shorter pieces which included Stojowski's 'Amourette de Pierrot,' Moussorgski's 'Kinderscherz' and for a final outburst of virtuosity Liszt's 'Rakoczy March.' The audience was of good size."

STAATS-ZEITUNG

N. Y. Staats-Zeitung, Nov. 15, 1916: "The artist was in his happiest mood, and called forth no criticism through his freshness, his originality and his wholesome interpretation and great technic."

SUN

N. Y. Sun, Nov. 15, 1916: "It opened with MacDowell's 'Eroica' sonata, which was followed by Schumann's 'Etudes Symphoniques' and the B minor sonata of Chopin. "Mr. Ganz's readings of the three compositions were admirably planned and executed. In each one there was a purpose bent wholly upon a revelation of the composer's mood without any personal display, and a fine musicianship, power and taste were shown. The player seemed to grasp complete the grandeur and the poetic spirit in MacDowell's music, and the audience enthusiastically applauded him."

AMERICAN

N. Y. American, Nov. 15, 1916: "Now whether one agrees with Mr. Lawrence Gilman or not, that MacDowell has given us 'the noblest musical incarnation of the Arthurian legend which we have,' it must be conceded that he has written pages that throb with emotional vigor and romantic ardor. And Mr. Ganz brought to his task yesterday not only the technical skill and power which the music requires but also the poetic insight and feeling for dramatic effect which are essential to an inspiring reading of the work. His playing combined nobility, tenderness, grace, humor, delicacy and impassioned vehemence."

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