

Miklos Gafni Called Voice Of Generation

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late editions.

By GLENN DILLARD GUNN

Miklos Gafni, the new Hungarian tenor, is the voice of his generation. What opera and the concert stage need he had—a tone of beauty and power, superbly disciplined, and a musical address that is based on lyric as well as verbal diction.

Thursday night, in Constitution Hall, his listeners were not numerous, but they were convinced to a point that kept him adding encores to a program made up in larger part of unfamiliar numbers. A wise management never would have sent a newcomer out into the hinterland — meaning west of the Hudson—with a program of novelties. Having the opportunity to promote a tenor who resembles Gigli more nearly than any sent us by Europe since the war, an experienced impresario would have seen to it that he sang the repertoire associated in the minds of the public with that famous artist.

Not Popular Program

Instead they let him sing songs and arias by Stradella, Verdi, Cilea, Tschalkowsky, Kucson, Kodaly, Bartok, and Cioffi, which the general public never had heard. True he got a chance at a favorite tried and true with Donizetti's "Una furtive lagrima," an aria in which Gigli used to triumph, just as he did Leoncavallo's lyric trifle entitled "Mattinata," which closed the program. But two popular items from the accepted tenor repertoire do not make popular program.

Was Nazi Prisoner

As it happened last night's audience accepted the unfamiliar material gladly because each song was clothed, so to speak, in Gafni's golden tone, and was set forth with art made convincing by its wealth of feeling and its admirable musicianship. Gafni has only to sing. He is not obliged to clown on the concert stage as Gigli chose to do; but within the limits set by convention he could act a bit with

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no damage to his dignity. A wise manager would see to it that he is taught to do so, assuming that he has lessons in stage deportment and personal address that still must be learned.

Gafni came out of a German concentration camp weighing 90 pounds and he's not a small man. Hollywood filmed this tragic preface to his career in a picture not yet released. Then high-priced American food began to take effect so that for his next screen appearance Gafni will be obliged to diet. Despite ungainly girth he could contrive, even now, to appear less awkward.

All of which may be important to his continued success but has nothing to do with the reaction of last night's audience. These music lovers seemed delighted to make the acquaintance of Lenski's aria from Tschalkowsky's "Eugene Onegin." Likewise they found Mac-

don's duet's aria from Verdi's forgotten opera "Macbeth" eminently worth hearing, and the excerpt from Cilea's "L'Arlesiana" still more admirable.

The Hungarian songs were accepted with mounting enthusiasm, despite the unintelligible text. The Kodaly song was particularly fine. Gafni can sing English, pleasantly and with fair intelligibility. But he was badly advised in his choice of American songs, offering unworthy trifles by MacGlinchy and Sanderson.

It is to be hoped that he comes again this season despite the poor house.

