

Music in Palestine

An Interview with Ossip Gabrilowitch.

"They till the soil all Day, and in the Evening they listen to Theory, Harmony and Composition."

OSSIP GABRILOWITCH, world-known Russian Jewish composer and pianist, is the Director of the Detroit Symphony, and a Symphony is a very serious attempt. It takes an immense wealth of technical knowledge as well as a large volume of inspiration to give it interest and variety.

As Mr. Gabrilowitch appeared to me an ideal subject for an article or interview, I wrote him to this effect. When his secretary informed me I would be received the following Saturday afternoon between the hours of five and six, I seized upon the privilege with delight. It meant for me a more favourable and balanced opportunity to study at close range a famous Director, and it was with some awe that I made my way to his home.

As luck would have it, my watch was a trifle fast, so I strolled along beautiful Boston Boulevard for a few blocks, and, lo and behold, I met the "Director" himself. For the moment I was stunned—you know, I had planned to say so many things, and instead, I found myself pointing my finger at him and saying rather

its fur. And how it purred, brrr. . . . But—(sotto voce)—I still don't like cats.

AFTER the cat episode, Mr. Gabrilowitch led me into the drawing room. I was immediately interested and impressed by the arrangement of the room we were in. It was spacious and very happily furnished.

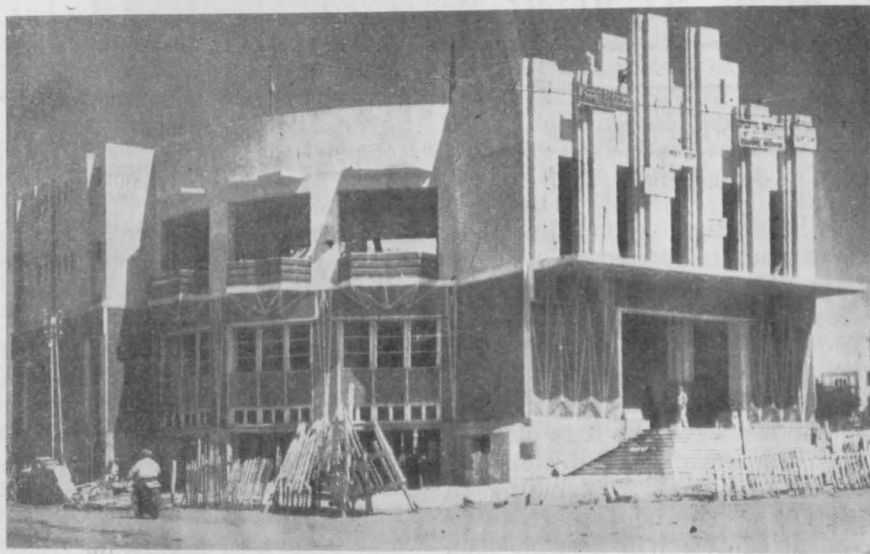
"I have a long list of questions," I announced. "I would like the remainder of the hour."

"What are they?" he asked.

"I believe you are interested in the advancement of music in Palestine; and this is not a small thing, when you take into consideration that the people are now primarily concerned with getting the bare necessities of life."

Seating himself on a small, comfortable sofa, and motioning me to sit beside him, he settled back, then just as quickly sat bolt upright and looked straight at me or through me, if you will, as if that were some cabalistic method of invoking thought.

He began to talk, and a strange thing happened. The more I looked at the famous "director" the longer



The new Opera House, in Tel Aviv, shortly before completion.

audaciously: "Why, Mr. Gabrilowitch, I have a five o'clock appointment with you." I think I detected a keen twinkle in his eye when he replied: "Yes, young lady, but you are early, and I thought I would have time to do an errand." This was said in almost schoolboy fashion, and when I suggested he go on his errand and I would continue to stroll until he returned, he politely took me by the arm and led me back to his home at Number 611.

On the way he stopped the caretaker, who was taking the dog out for an airing, patted the dog fondly, chatted for a few minutes; and then we were on our way again. He told me very enthusiastically of his Persian cat. Personally, I do not like cats, and when I told "Herr Director" this, he said: "Wait till you see my cat." By this time we had arrived at Mr. Gabrilowitch's door and sure enough the "cat" greeted us. It certainly is a beauty with an immense yellow, bushy tail and the largest green eyes.

Mr. Gabrilowitch immediately tried to tell me how like a tiger it was and held the cat in his arms, stroking

I seemed to have known him—I forgot I was interviewing for an article. I heard only the intimate conversation of a friend.

"You probably will recall that two years ago Mischa Elman and myself gave a joint recital in Carnegie Hall, New York, to provide funds for the newly-formed Society for Advancement of Music in Palestine. It was shortly after my visit there, and I had been deeply touched by the appreciation music was receiving.

"Picture, if you can, highly educated and intellectual men and women, who, with ardent spirit almost impossible to define, till the soil all day in the hot sun (and in Palestine the sun is hot!) and at the close of the day come to listen to lectures in theory, composition, harmony and fugue. To look at their intent faces is an inspiration in itself.

"If a visiting artist arrives and music is to be played or sung, a small bell is rung—immediately everything stops and people hurry to listen to the concert; and how they listen!

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