

THE CELLO HAS ITS GODESS : WALEVSKA

Confronted with Christine Walevska, we're tempted to recast mythology and allude to the Duse of music--as though Venus herself were to acquire arms and play the lyre in place of Apollo. Walevska is a Venus who plays the cello divinely. Her presence on stage looms larger and auditorily swells in the harmonies she extracts from this masculine instrument so difficult to elegantly adapt to the feminine condition.

Walevska incorporates the cello with the greatest possible identification with it. She gives the utmost naturalness of her technique, even at the most brilliant moments of virtuosity, as well as spontaneity and correctness of phrasing, extraordinary diversity of coloring, the quality of a cantabile sound, making you realize that the cello is the instrument that most resembles the human voice. Actually, it is she herself that sings through those chords, and the organic vibrations that possess her chameleon-like show that the music takes possession of her entirely, like an inner angel-devil.

But I would hesitate to compare Walevska to Casals, Rostropovich, or Tortelier. Besides the fact that every great artist has his or her own distinctive individuality, the essentially female makeup does not allow us to draw a parallel. You may say that she has been made fruitful by the gift of music. In contemplating her, the idea strikes us that this is a case more of a possession than of a re-creation. Within the purview of her womanhood, confronted with a virile instru-

ment, her sound is--and it couldn't be otherwise--less than that of any of those masters. But--votaries of Walevska--don't read into this observation a blasphemy against the Duse. Her sound is simply precious. It has refinement, subtleties, filigrees, which boggle the mind. Besides that, at a Dvorak concert, with the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra conducted by Maestro Jacques Bodmer, we were in a theatre filled with an enthusiastic audience that fed on a Slavic emotional intensity that gave contagious relief both to the songs and to the rhythm of dances popularly inspired.

This Dvorak concert serves as a model of interpretative authenticity. It can just the same be said that she is more profoundly instinctive, more a pure musical flame than the fruit of a slow process of spiritual introspection. When she stepped forward on the stage, triumphant, after performing the Dvorak concert, you would think she had just finished playing for us some solo selection from Bach. She executed an extraordinary pizzicato, a delightful Bolognini's Serenata. One should not draw from this the conclusion that she prefers a less substantial repertory. Casals himself, an interpreter of Bach, recorded numerous sweet-smelling pieces which he valued to the hilt.

The Brazilian Symphony Orchestra did well by the concert, with Schubert's Fourth, Piazzola's Sinfonietta (a very interesting work), and Santoro's Ponteio. But Walevska was the cynosure of both atmosphere and attention.