

CONVERSATIONS UNLIMITED - Monday, Jan. 21, 1985

INTRO UP AND UNDER

Hi, everybody. We're going to a concert rehearsal today, and then we'll talk with one of the soloists, a 12-year-old prodigy whose father is the famous Nobel laureate, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The youngster emerged this winter from the wilds of Vermont, where the family has lived since being ordered out of the Soviet Union, and performed for the first time outside his home state. We'll hear Ignat Solzhenitsyn in rehearsal, and we'll talk with him.

Later in the program, we'll discuss the pleasures, and the problems, of young musical geniuses with Lazar Gosman, a world renowned violinist and himself an outstanding musician as a child. He conducted the Soviet Emigre Orchestra and the soloists in their New York performance.

Ignat Solzhenitsyn stands 5-feet-4 and is a rugged young man. But he's only 12 years old and so he was a musical curiosity when he appeared during the holiday season at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Ignat plays the piano...quite well, according to his teacher, other musicians and critics. We'll begin our visit with him at Stony Brook's Fine Arts Center as he rehearses some of Saint-Saens' Carnival of Animals with Natasha Paden, who emigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union during World War II.

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Let me emphasize, please, that the tapes we will be playing from the rehearsal are, of course, not of concert quality. That, however, is what may make them interesting to a radio audience. We turned the microphones on and just listened in as the two pianists worked with the conductor. Here's an early part of the rehearsal:

TAPE Side 1 000 - 037

AFO: Lazar Gosman is a strong conductor. In this next rehearsal segment, you'll hear his voice calling the beat.

TAPE Side 1 060 - 068

AFO: Now, I want you to close your eyes. Imagine two black concert grand pianos, nose to nose. On your right is 12-year-old Ignat Solzhenitsyn. On your left is Natashe Paden, the veteran pianist. Watch and listen now as they rehearse one of Saint-Saen's most flourishing pieces. Envision this young man reaching so far to his right on some of the runs that he is almost out of his chair.

TAPE Side 1 085-100

AFO: And here is another section requiring great physical effort by the pianists.

TAPE Side 1 219-234

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AFO: There is just more part that I would like you to hear. This is the work's dramatic ending. You'll hear Professor Gosman call out the cadence to begin.

TAPE SIDE 2 312-326

AFO: During a break in the rehearsal at Stony Brook, I talked with Ignat Solzhenitsyn, the 12-year-old piano prodigy. Remember: this was a rehearsal. You'll hear noises in the background and, during the interview, another reporter asks a question or two.

TAPE SIDE 2 336 - AFO - "You work hard..." through to

396 - IS - "I don't have any leanings."

AFO LIVE: That was Ignat Solzhenitsyn, a ninth grader who can sit at a piano and play Chopin and Mozart and other composers' classical works. Compared to the average pre-teen, he's a musical genius. But is he really?

The reviewer for a New York daily newspaper was somewhat reserved in his report of the concert. The critic suggested that there is a difference between being very good and being a world-class concert performer, and he wasn't willing to put young Solzhenitsyn in the world-class group, at least not just yet.

The young pianist himself might not disagree with that. Asked during an interview if he will become a professional musician, he answered: "Right now, I really like playing music. Of course, you know, I'm only 12."

MORE MORE MORE

And, then there is Lazar Gosman, the eminent violinist who conducted Ignat in his appearance with the Soviet Emigre Orchestra at Stony Brook in December. He regards the youngster as "a big talent, a powerful musician." Is Ignat a musical genius? Professor Gosman does not answer that question directly. It is clear he believes that Ignat Solzhenitsyn has the talent to be a world-class performer. But in the end he, too, offers the eternal caution of the wise and experienced. After all, he notes, the boy is still only a boy.

14:00

AFO LIVE: We'll return in a moment with Lazar Gosman.

BRIDGE MUSIC UP AND UNDER

Hi. I'm Al Oickle and I'm at the State University of New York at Stony Brook with Lazar Gosman, professor of music, and founder, concertmaster and director of music of the Soviet Emigre Orchestra. I enjoyed watching your rehearsal and hearing some of it replayed. As I said to Ignat Solzhenitsyn, you work hard!

INTERVIEW LAZAR GOSMAN: -- His own experiences as a youth

-- How talented is Ignat?

-- What advice to parents about youngsters?

(Cover kids like Darrel Stark at SUSB)

-- How to maintain a "normal life"

29:00

OUTRO