Ormandy Offers Bennett Works

By JOHN BRIGGS

Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra made their appearance in Carnegie Hall last evening, offering as the evening's novelty a sheaf of compositions by Robert Russell Bennett, "Eight Etudes for Orchestra," plus Artur Rubinstein and the Tchaikovsky piano concerto.

Although the Bennett pieces are not new (they were commissioned and played in 1938 by Howard Barlow and the CBS Orchestra), they have not yet made the rounds of the concert halls. In last evening's performance they proved to be altogether pleasant listening. Mr. Bennett is not too bankrupt in fancy to invent a good melody, nor too proud to set it down. His pieces are neatly constructed, with variety and contrast, and sound well in the orchestra.

That irrepressible drollery which is Mr. Bennett's trademark, and which occasionally finds expression in the music, comes entirely to the fore in the delightful program-notes which the composer has supplied. A characteristic touch is that No. 4 concerns itself with baseball (though what relation the tempo indication "ben animato, quasi una fantasia" bears to a strikeout by King Carl Hubbell must be left to the Puckish Mr. Bennett).

As for Mr. Rubinstein, it is a bit appalling to think how many performances of the Tchaikovsky he must have behind him—possibly a score in the current season alone. But one of the charms of Mr. Rubinstein's playing is that he performs a piece as if it had been called to his attention only a couple of weeks ago, and as if he were still excited by the discovery. His dazzling feats of bravura in the opening movement, his lyric treatment of the andantino, and the splendor of the finale, induced a similar excitement in the audience. After hearing Mr. Rubinstein play the concerto, one is convinced anew that it will survive its present curse of "popularity."