Glenn Gould Captivates Symphony Audience

By HERBERT GARON

Monday night a phenomenal young man, slender of build and interesting of face, with a Li’l Abner shock of unruly hair, sat down in a low folding-chair and bent reverentially over the keyboard of a piano; and the cascade of tone that poured forth was of such clarity that a capacity Music Hall audience was moved to a demonstration unique in the annals of Houston concert lore.

Glenn Gould, the daring young man on the musical trapeze, pooled his talents with the Houston Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcom Sargent to produce a superb, but mannered, reading of Bach’s D Minor Concerto. Gould does not have an antiquarian attitude toward Bach. His interpretation of old music has lots of life and no preciousness. The piano is no imitation harpsichord; it sounds like a piano, with a piano’s dynamics and color. His playing was imaginative and assertive, vital and mechanical. It had the breadth of pace and rhythmic grasp which define the true Bach interpreter. The counterpoint was crystal clear, with clean articulation and no pedal blurring. Gould doesn’t merely interpret Bach’s music; he re-creates it.

A group of excerpts from Wagner’s philosophic music drama “Die Meistersinger” brought together three of the loveliest episodes from the most human of his operas. The theme of resignation that motivates the prelude to act three was emotionally stirring. The “Dance of the Apprentices” and the finely pompous “Procession of the Masters” were given spirited readings in a performance that had about it the festival atmosphere that permeates this portion of the opera.

The orchestra gave a zestful rendition of Rossini’s overture to “Il Viaggio a Reims,” but failed to realize the dramatic content of Sibelius’s Symphony Number 1. The latter was a listless performance, uninspired and uninspiring.