Aesthetic Artiste

NORMA LONG

“Hello there, Norma. Can you wait a few seconds while I finish?” asked Bomar Cramer, Indianapolis’ foremost pianist, as he suddenly emerged from his studio into his reception room. He extended a firm, warm hand into which I meekly put my cold one, and then he quickly disappeared again into his studio as I faintly murmured, “Why, certainly.” I had been waiting for Mr. Cramer for about five minutes, and during this time, I surveyed his outer surroundings. The room was rather dark and was entered from the outside through a heavily-draped glass partitioned door. Directly opposite the chair in which I was seated was a bust of Mr. Cramer, to the right side an autographed picture of Lawrence Tibbet and to the left an autographed picture of Rudolph Ganz. The room was a small one, but not overcrowded with furniture. It was pleasing and restful.

Mr. Cramer entered again, introduced me to a leaving pupil, and ushered me into his studio. I was immediately made comfortable and then Mr. Cramer began to talk. He now has a small exhibition of water colors at the Art Center of Indiana University in connection with a formal exhibition of Mr. Burke of the Art Department at Indiana University. This exhibition is an effort to link together the art world and the music world. Mr. Cramer first started painting when he was in the first grade in a school in Texas. When he was in the fifth grade, as a reward for outstanding work in his art class, he was taken to an exhibition at a well-known conservatory in Texas to see the work of the academy. The president of this academy had heard that he played the piano also, so she asked him to play for her. A scholarship was arranged for with a department head of the music school. During Mr. Cramer’s first year of study of piano there was great competition between his teachers as to which field he should make a life study. As we all know, music won and art was given up entirely until about ten years ago when Mr. Cramer began to paint for enjoyment while in Michigan and also in Mexico.

When asked about modern music Mr. Cramer said he liked it very much, but that he did not play much modern music in Indianapolis because the Indianapolis populus insisted on the older, romantic pieces, particularly the works of Chopin. In Mr. Cramer’s opinion, modern music is not always beautiful, but as long as it is architecturally strong, has design and cleverness, and is intellectual to a degree, it is good. He added that modern music is difficult at large, and he went ahead to say that Tchaikowsky “is not in the scheme of things.”

Mr. Cramer feels that Mexico is a paradise. He loves all foods, but is particularly delighted with the greasy, highly seasoned foods of the Mexicans. He spent three summers in Mexico, one playing in the National Theatre in Mexico City (1935) and the other two painting. He said that some small restaurant in Austin made him stay in Texas last summer because it served the favored Mexican foods.

Mr. Cramer is an extremely dark individual. His hair is dark and straight, his eyes are snapping, his skin dark, his stature good, and his smile pleasing.
smokes all of the time, and constantly paces the floor even while talking on the telephone. His manners are superb. He is quite charming and endeavors to make all around him feel at ease. He likes to be surrounded by either extremely modern furniture or furniture of the Renaissance period.

Mr. Cramer was kind enough to allow me to examine some of the relics in his studio and explained the history of some to me. In one corner was an early seventeenth century Florentine cabinet. On the wall above his second grand piano was a chasuble of the early eighteenth century. This was a delicate lavender satin interwoven with silver thread. On a small stand in front of one of the windows was a handcarved Mexican Madonna by Miguel Magano. Displayed on the most inconspicuous wall was an oil painting of Mr. Cramer done by Mrs. William C. Bobbs of the Bobbs Merrill Company. In another corner on a high pedestal was a statue of Diana de Gabies, willed to Mr. Cramer by the late Mrs. de Marcus Brown. Pictures of his sponsors, Lawrence Tibbet, Rudolph Ganz, and Joseph Levene were the only photographs displayed. He explained that he did not exhibit pictures of his artist friends because he felt so many pictures "clutter up the walls." Mr. Cramer likes his studio because it is secluded from the noise and hum-drum of the outside world.

By then the allotted time so graciously granted me by Mr. Cramer had hurried along too fast, and I left with the feeling that many hours could be spent pleasurably with this great artist.

Sam Vello

LENA WILLKIE

Sam was a foreigner employed at the steel mill in my home town but no one seemed to know his nationality. He was one of the "wops" which meant that he was from one of those mysterious countries in southeastern Europe. This was obvious from his physical characteristics and his accent. Sam was short and stocky with the heavy shoulders of one who earns his living by manual labor. Black hair and eyes, a swarthy complexion with a heavy beard showing blue below a closely shaved skin which was coarsely textured, sideburns a trifle too long, high cheekbones and blunt features gave him a somewhat Mongoloid appearance. His hair was always neatly trimmed and kept in perfect order by the lavish use of pomades. He always looked to me like a crude edition of George Raft.

At the mill the men treated Sam with derisive tolerance, for he came to work neatly dressed. Work in a steel mill is hot and dirty and most men wear dirty overalls, ragged shirts and jackets. Of course, Sam wore the rough clothes the work required but they were clean and neatly patched. Also, mill workers were conspicuous for the redness of their faces which was caused by the great heat of the furnaces. Sam protected his face by a mask. The other men could have done the same but they considered it sissy to worry about their looks. Although he