

THE PIANOLIST

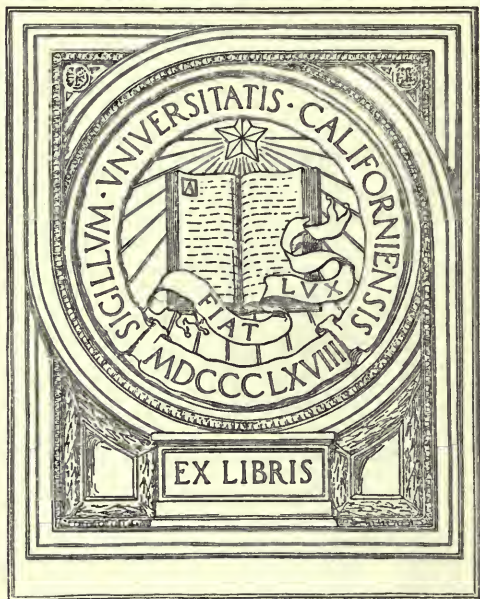
BY
GUSTAV
KOBBE

ornia

al

y

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE PIANOLIST

THE PIANOLIST

A GUIDE FOR PIANOLA PLAYERS

BY

GUSTAV KOBBE

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO APPRECIATE MUSIC," ETC.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY

1912

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES

COPYRIGHT 1907, BY
MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY
NEW YORK

Fourth Edition, February, 1912

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY

MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY

NEW YORK

MUSIC
LIBRARY

MT
700
K79P
1912

Gift of Mrs. A. G. Morrison 3-27-43

TO MY FRIEND

JOSEPH HUTCHISON STEVENSON

427466

CONTENTS

I.	THE TITLE AND PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK	I
II.	THE CHARM OF PLAYING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT YOURSELF...	10
III.	FIRST STEPS OF THE MUSICAL NOVICE	39
IV.	THE THRILL OF THE GREAT MASTERS	83
V.	AN "OPEN SESAME" TO CHOPIN..	117
VI.	NOTES ON SOME OTHER MASTERS.	141
VII.	EDUCATIONAL FACTORS	150
VIII.	A FEW "DON'TS" FOR PIANOLISTS	159



I. THE TITLE AND PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

MY book, "How to Appreciate Music," in the chapter devoted to the piano-forte, contains a paragraph relating to the Pianola and its influence in popularizing music and stimulating musical taste. I confess that before I started that paragraph I was puzzled to know what term to use in designating the instrument I had in mind. "Mechanical piano-player" is a designation which not only does not appeal to me, but, furthermore, fails to do justice to the instrument, which, although mechanical in its working, is far from being mechanical in its effects.

The result?—I took a cross cut and arrived straight at the word Pianola as being the name of the most widely known piano-

THE PIANOLIST

player, and happily derived from the name of the most widely known instrument, the pianoforte or, as it is more popularly termed, the piano. For this reason the term Pianola was used in the paragraph referred to and now is employed in this book; and, for the same reason, this book is called "The Pianolist." It is believed to be the title least requiring explanation, if, indeed, it requires any explanation at all. Right here, however, I must add that the company which manufactures the Pianola objects to the use of the word as a generic term.

So much for the title. Now for the purpose of this book.

Soon after the publication of "How to Appreciate Music" I discovered that the paragraph concerning this new musical instrument had made a hit. It was widely quoted as evidence of the "up-to-dateness" of the book and I began to receive letters

TITLE AND PURPOSE

from Pianola owners who were pleased that the merits of the instrument should have been recognized in a serious book on music. Among these was a letter from a Mr. Harry Mason, of Detroit, suggesting that I should write a book for the use of those who owned piano-players. Mr. Mason and myself never have met. He knows me merely as an author of a book on music. All I know of him is that he is one of the editors of a druggists' trade paper in Detroit. Yet from him has come the suggestion which has led me to write this book, although, to judge from his letter, he had not been deeply interested in music until he began to use a "player" and, through it, was led to ask for a book which would tell him, in untechnical language, something about an art that was beginning to have eloquence and meaning for him. To me this is highly significant, for there must be thousands of others like him all

THE PIANOLIST

over the country, to whom, in the same way, the great awakening just is coming through the Pianola—at first a means of amusement, then an educator with the element of amusement, but of a higher order, left in!

Shortly after I received Mr. Mason's letter an incident added greatly to the force of his suggestion. I always have been very fond of Schubert's "Rosamunde" impromptu. The first person I heard play it publicly was Annette Essipoff, a Russian pianist and one of the very few great women pianists of the world. Frequently I have heard it since then, but never so charmingly interpreted excepting—But that is the most interesting part of the story.

One night I was at my desk in my study, when, suddenly, I heard the strains of this impromptu, which is an air with variations, from the direction of the drawing room. It was sweet and tender, graceful and expres-

TITLE AND PURPOSE

sive, according to the character of the variations; and, when the last variation began with a crispness and delicacy that made me wonder what great virtuoso was at my piano-forte without my knowing it, I hurried to the drawing room and, entering it—found my fourteen year old daughter seated at a Pianola. The instrument had arrived only a short time before from the house of a friend who had gone South for the winter. My daughter never had had a music lesson, never had heard Schubert's "Rosamunde" impromptu. Yet she had, without any effort, been the first to take me back to Essipoff's playing of Schubert's charming work! It would have been ludicrous had it not meant so much. In fact it was ludicrous because, a few days before, when the instrument had just been delivered and set up, I had been deceived in much the same manner by her playing of a composition by Grieg.

THE PIANOLIST

But to return to the Schubert impromptu. Essipoff, my young daughter, the associate editor of a druggist' paper in Detroit, and myself; the first a great virtuoso, the second a schoolgirl, the third a writer on a trade paper, the fourth a music critic—what a leveller of distinctions, what a universal musical provider the Pianola is! Ten years ago the virtuoso and the music critic would have been the only ones concerned. The schoolgirl and the trade paper editor wouldn't have been "in it." Now, the schoolgirl was playing like a virtuoso and the writer on drugs and druggists was giving hints to the music critic. A great leveller, placing the musical elect and those who formerly would have had to remain outside the pale, on a common footing! This may not always appeal to the musical elect, but think what it means to the great mass of those who are genuinely musical but have lacked the op-

TITLE AND PURPOSE

portunity for musical study or to those whose taste for music never has been brought out.

To paraphrase a few sentences from my "How to Appreciate Music" that have been much quoted:—

“‘Are you musical?’

“‘No,’ nine persons out of ten will reply; ‘I neither play nor sing.’

“‘Your answer shows a complete misunderstanding of the case. Because you neither play nor sing, it by no means follows that you are unmusical. If you love music and appreciate it, you may be more musical than many pianists and singers; or latent within you and only awaiting the touchstone of music there may be a deeper love and appreciation of the art than can be attributed to many virtuosos. For most of a virtuoso’s love and appreciation is apt to be centered upon himself. And when you say, ‘I cannot play,’ you are mistaken. You are think-

THE PIANOLIST

ing of the pianoforte. You may not be able to play that. But you or any one else can play the Pianola, and that instantly places at your command all the technical resources of which even the greatest virtuosos can boast."

One purpose of this book thus is to bring home to people an appreciation of what this modern instrument is, whether it is regarded as a toy with which the business man amuses himself with two-steps and ragtime after business hours, or as a serious musical instrument.

Another purpose, and a large one, is to furnish Pianolists with a guide to the music which they play, or might play if their attention were directed to it and to some of its characteristics, and to point out the importance of the instrument in developing a love of good music.

I also have in writing this book a purpose

TITLE AND PURPOSE

which I may describe as personal. I believe I was the first American to publish an analysis of the Wagner music dramas that seemed to be what the public wanted, and the first to contribute to a magazine of general circulation an article on Richard Strauss. It is a matter of pride with me always to be found on the firing line—even if it is the privilege of those who watch the battle from a safe distance to dictate the despatches and take the credit for the result to themselves. And so, I wish to be the first to write a book on the Pianola, an instrument of such importance to the progress and popular spread of music that, at the present time, we can have but a faint glimmering of the great part it is destined to play.

II. THE CHARM OF PLAYING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT YOURSELF

HOW I wish I could play like that! What is more common than this exclamation from people who are listening to a great virtuoso or even only to a fairly clever amateur? They realize that, no matter how much they may enjoy a performance, there is much greater fascination in being the performer. Not a musical person but would play if he could. Why, however, that "if"? It no longer exists. It has been eliminated. The charm, the fascination of playing a musical instrument yourself can be yours, and the only "if" to it is—if you have intelligence enough to appreciate what that means.

What formerly was an insuperable obstacle, the lack of technical facility—the real inability to play—absolutely has been done away with. There is no excuse for any-

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

body's not playing who wants to. The Pianola furnishes the technique, the dexterity, the finger facility, or whatever you may choose to call it. So far as this is concerned the instrument itself makes you a virtuoso—places you on a par with a Liszt, Paderewski or Rosenthal. It does so mechanically, yet without the sharpness and insistent preciseness of a machine. Its action is pneumatic and the effect of the compressed air is to impart to its “touch”—the manner in which its “fingers” strike the keys—an elasticity which at least is comparable with the touch of human fingers. As a friend of mine, a lawyer, who has owned three Pianolas and who actually has been made musical through them, expresses it:—“When you've got a mechanical device as good or nearly as good as a virtuoso, you've got something of enormous importance to the whole world.” And so you have.

THE PIANOLIST

I find a great feature of the so-called mechanical piano-player lies in what it allows you to do yourself. It provides you with technique, but, to use a colloquial phrase, "you can still call your soul your own." The technique, the substitute for that finger facility which only years of practice will give, is the Pianola's; but the interpretation is *yours!* The instrument provides the devices for accelerating or retarding the time and for making the tone loud or soft, but when to whip up the time or to slow down, when to use the sustaining or the soft lever or when to swell through a crescendo from pianissimo to fortissimo—all that is left to your own taste, judgment and discretion. There is, indeed, among the improvements introduced in the Pianola a contrivance, of which more hereafter, by which complete directions are given for the interpretation of the roll of music that is being played. These

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

directions, however, are not compulsory. They are, in each instance, based on high authority and are of great value even to persons who are thoroughly familiar with the music, but they need not be followed if the player does not want to follow them. He is likely in the beginning to accept the directions, the so-called Metrostyle marking, as he would the instruction of a high class teacher, while, later on, he may incline to regard the Metrostyle as indicating the general spirit in which the piece should be interpreted, but vary it in detail as his mood or fancy dictates. The Metrostyle may, in fact, be called the Pianolist's "coach," giving him the kind of hints and directions which even the greatest players and singers value. Something, however, of the Pianolist himself, something of his own thought and feeling goes into every interpretation. That this is so is proved by the fact that no two

THE PIANOLIST

Pianolists interpret the same composition alike. There are differences, more or less marked, just as there are when the same piece is played by two pianists. In the broader outlines, in general spirit, the interpretations may be the same, but they will be distinguished by subtle shadings that indicate temperamental differences. The perspective of a landscape varies when viewed from different windows; so does life when observed from different points of view; so does the interpretation of a composition when played by different people on the Pianola.

Were the instrument purely a mechanical device to wind up and set going, the artistic results of which it is capable never would have been obtained, and, I may add, this book never would have been written. The fact that artistic expression instead of machine-like precision has been its aim is what

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

has caused its possibilities as a musical instrument to appeal to me. It cannot be sufficiently urged that in this country, as in every other, there is an immense amount of latent musical taste awaiting only the touchstone of hearing music or, better still, the fascination of personally producing music, to assert itself. Before the invention of the piano-player hearing music was the only touchstone; through the piano-player there is added the fascination of being yourself a participator in producing the music you hear. When Theodore Thomas said "Nothing so awakens interest in music as helping to make it," he hit the nail on the head. "After playing all this music I want to go to concerts next winter. I'd like to hear how the 'Fifth Symphony' sounds on the orchestra," said my little girl after the Pianola had been in the house only a week. "All this music?" Yes indeed. More than

THE PIANOLIST

she could have become familiar with in six months' concert-going and instruction. And we always had said that she wasn't musical!

This fascination of personally producing music is such a great factor in the spread of musical taste that it is well worth looking into further. There always is more pleasure in doing something than in watching some one else do it. Take the average amateurs who get together for music. They enjoy what they play a thousand-fold more than if they were listening to the greatest virtuosos playing the same program. Why? Because always there is more satisfaction in doing the thing itself than merely in contemplating the result of what some one else is doing. And so, with music, "to experience the full fascination the divine art can exercise on us mortals, we must take an active part in the making of it." Through the Pianola the opportunity of taking an active

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

part in the making of it is open to everybody. Remember what my friend said. It is worth repeating. "When you've got a mechanical device as good, or nearly as good as a virtuoso, you've got something of enormous importance to the whole world." Mechanical, remember, only in a certain sense. Were it wholly mechanical it never could be "as good, or nearly as good, as a virtuoso."

Now let us see how this personal affiliation of Pianola and Pianolist, of instrument and player, has been worked out, so that the player is not a mere human treadmill pumping air into a cabinet on castors, but—whether he be a lawyer, merchant, financier, dressmaker, milliner, or society leader; one of the Four Hundred or one of the eighty million—a musical artist with an unlimited repertory.

The pianoforte is the most universal mus-

THE PIANOLIST

ical instrument of the civilized world. I once turned the old question, "What is home without a mother," into "What is home without a pianoforte?" Practically no household that makes claim to refinement is without one. Only too often, however, even in such homes, it is merely an article of drawing room furniture, because no member of the household can play it. There it stands waiting for the chance visitor who can strike the keys and make the strings vibrate with music.

Imagine that you are a member or let us say the head of that household. You can't play a note and yet you are "fond of music." This "fondness for music" manifests itself in different degree in different people and somewhat according to their opportunities. You may be a hardworking business man and when you come home from business, you want diversion, amusement. For some

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

one to suggest a classical concert to you would make you feel like being asked to begin the day's work all over again without a night's rest in between. As for Wagner, that would be worse than straightening out an intricate account after a day spent in poring over a ledger. No. Music without any tune to it may be all right for some people, but comic opera is "good enough" for you. You like that coon song you heard the other night. How you would enjoy playing it on the pianoforte if you only knew how! But you don't, so you have to pay a speculator three dollars for a seat if you want to hear it again.

Suppose the days of miracles weren't past and, by some miracle, you suddenly found yourself in command of the technique of the pianoforte—able to play whatever you wanted to. You'd buy that coon song and some other pieces of light music, and then

THE PIANOLIST

you'd hurry home to your pianoforte and play them off as fast as you could, while the family stood around and listened and marvelled.

That is precisely the miracle the Pianola performs for you. It gives you, from the moment it enters your house, control over the keyboard of the pianoforte that so long has stood mute in your home. All you have to do is to put in the perforated music roll, work the pedals—and the music begins. Supposing it is that coon song from the comic opera you liked so much. The first time you play it, you may be so interested in the instrument's accurate reproduction of the tune that you don't stop to think of the expression. The chances are, however, that your delight over what you have accomplished will lead you to play the song right over again. Now you begin to realize that there was something more than mere ac-

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

curacy in the delivery of the melody when you heard it at the theatre. There was interpretation, that something which the individual artist puts into everything he does. You will recall that while the piece was taken pretty fast as a whole, some phrases were taken faster, other more slowly. You have been told that by moving a little lever to the right or left, you can produce these effects. You try it. When you come to a phrase that should be taken a little faster, you move the lever slightly to the right—and the pianoforte responds. It is the same when you move the lever to the left for the slower phrases—the pianoforte responds and the phrase is retarded. Two other levers control the volume of sound so that you can play any part of the piece louder or softer if you want to. It is not at all unlikely that you may vary these details to suit yourself, instead of simply being guided by your recol-

THE PIANOLIST

lection of what you heard at the theatre. In a word you yourself become on the spot an interpreter of music, put something of yourself into what you play. The instrument instead of being merely a machine that grinds out music is a machine only in so far as it takes the place of technique, of finger facility. The expression, the real interpretation, that which gives one the fascination of playing, is your own.

That's your first experience with the instrument. Pretty soon you are apt to have another experience that is even more valuable. You stocked up pretty well with the music of the day, the current Broadway comic opera and musical comedy successes. Gradually, however, that pet coon song of yours will begin to pall on you a little. The very jingle to the tune that made it catch your fancy so quickly causes you to tire of it, and so it goes with the other pieces whose

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

rhythm is so marked and continued with such great precision and whose tunefulness was so obvious that they made an instantaneous impression upon your musically untrained sense of hearing. You are beginning to find out what any one who is trained in any art is bound to discover sooner or later. The things most easily understood are not apt to give the most lasting pleasure. Some one suggests to you that you try one of the lighter classical pieces. You don't like that word "classical," it suggest heaviness, lack of tunefulness, the kind of thing that "may be all right for some people," but never, you think, would suit you. At last, however, you yield. You inquire for something of the kind and are advised to try Mendelssohn's "Spring Song." Much to your surprise you don't find it heavy at all. In fact you recall once having heard it played between the acts in a theatre and having

THE PIANOLIST

thought it rather pretty. Its rhythm isn't as persistently emphatic as that of ragtime, nor does its melody stand out in such sharp relief, but instead of wearying you on repetition, you like it better every time you play it.

Encouraged by this experience you next purchase the same composer's "Spinning Song." This may not appeal to you so much at first. It seems to run along very rapidly without any very clearly defined melody. Still, it is by the same composer as the "Spring Song," so it may be worth trying over again. It is more familiar now, and you begin to associate the rapid, whirling phrases with its title—with the idea of "spinning." How clear it suddenly becomes. You even conjure up in your mind the picture of some young woman in quaint garb seated at a spinning wheel in an old-fashioned room—and you find yourself ex-

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

perienicing all the pleasure that comes from association of ideas, the keenest enjoyment that art affords. You are making rapid progress now, so rapid that it is as impossible as unnecessary to follow you step by step. The main point is that you are becoming truly musical and at the same time enjoying it. What might be "all right for some people" has become all right for you too. You have been repaid a thousand-fold for the little effort it cost you to discover through the gradual development of a taste that had lain dormant, the kind of music that "lasts." The same thing is true of your whole family. It has become musical, and in an incredibly short space of time. The Pianola has done it, and done the same thing in thousands of other cases.

Now take the case of some one whose musical taste, to begin with, is more advanced. Supposing that, instead of having

THE PIANOLIST

had your musical horizon bounded by coon songs and comic operas, you were an attendant at orchestral concerts, song and pianoforte recitals and grand opera. You are a genuine music lover, genuinely musical, but you can't play. You long to reproduce and express at home the music you have heard elsewhere. If only, after hearing Paderewski play your favorite Chopin nocturne, which, as with so many other music lovers, is the exquisite one in G major, Opus 37, No. 2, you could go to your own pianoforte and play it! You think it is one of the most beautiful compositions in the whole repertory, and of all pianists whom you have heard, Paderewski, in your opinion, plays it better than any other. There are pieces that sound more difficult and you have been told that it doesn't call for advanced technique as much as it does for soul. That is what your favorite vir-

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

tuoso seems to you to put into it—soul, his own soul, interpreting himself, unconsciously expressing his own thoughts and feelings, through those of the composer. That is what you are convinced you could do, if only you knew how to play; for you are musical, very musical, almost, in fact, to your finger tips. But these, alas, never have been trained to command the keyboard. You are getting along well in business, making money and all that; and yet you look upon your life as half a failure because, although you have the temperament artistic, you are unable to gratify fully your passion for music. You can listen, but you can't play. You can hear Paderewski interpret your favorite nocturne, but you can't go home to your own pianoforte and let your fingers conjure up memories of it on the keyboard. You have a beautiful pianoforte in your house—for the use of others.

THE PIANOLIST

You'd be willing to mortgage half your income for life, if you could learn to play it yourself. But it's too late for that now. So you think.

But one day you drop in at a friend's house and from the drawing room come strains of your favorite Chopin nocturne. Something about it reminds you of the way Paderewski plays it. Who can it be? You know that your friend doesn't play the pianoforte. But, as you stand in the doorway, hesitating whether to go in or not, it is he who looks out at you from behind the instrument and nods to you to come in. You drop into a chair and listen and wonder. The nocturne comes to an end, your friend rises, greets your wondering look with a smile, and meets your amazed query with one word: "Pianola!"

"It sounded like Paderewski," you stammer in a dazed sort of way.

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

“Why shouldn’t it? Practically, I have been taught how to play it by that great artist.” He takes out the roll and brings it over for you to look at. On it you see, reproduced in facsimile this autographed certification:

“The line on this roll indicates the tempo according to my interpretation.

“I. J. Paderewski.”

The roll, as the expression goes, has been “metrostyled” by the virtuoso himself.

“I didn’t know you had one of these instruments. Why haven’t you told me?—How long have you had it?”

“About a week,” he answers.

“And you can make it sound like that?”

“Of course I can. Nothing easier. Just stand behind me and watch.”

He replaces the music roll and, as he pedals and it unrolls, he shows you how easy it is with the Metrostyle to follow the

THE PIANOLIST

red line marked by Paderewski to indicate how he plays the piece.

“According to my idea,” continues your friend, “he plays some parts of the second melody a little too slowly—makes it too sentimental, instead of poetically expressive. You may observe that I don’t always follow the line. That’s one of the great things about the instrument. You can profit by the directions just as much as you want to, but you can disregard them whenever you have a mind to. It may seem presumptuous to differ, even in a small detail, from a great virtuoso like Paderewski, but every virtuoso has his idiosyncrasies and we, who, after all, have been listening to music all our lives and have heard all the great pianists from Rubinstein to ‘Paddy’ himself and all the women pianists from Essipoff to Bloomfield-Zeisler, are entitled to some ideas of our own. As I just said, one of the great

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

things about the instrument is that it allows us this latitude. I call it a cinch!

“Now here’s something else. We know Richard Strauss’ big tone poems, the biggest things in music since Wagner. But did you know that he’s written some charming little pieces for pianoforte? Just listen to this. It’s a ‘Träumerei’ or ‘Revery,’ a delicious little dreamy improvisation. He ‘metrostyled’ it himself and, as I’ve never heard anyone play it, I’m only too glad to have his directions. They give you the general hang of the thing ‘right off the reel,’ so to speak. But later on, when I become more familiar with it, if I want to vary the interpretation according to my own mood of the moment, I can. It’s a great thing, though, to find out how famous living composers, like Richard Strauss, Grieg—here are a couple of rolls from his ‘Peer Gynt’ suite metrostyled by himself—Saint Saëns,

THE PIANOLIST

Elgar, or even composers of first rate lighter music, like Moszkowski and Chaminade, conceive that they want to have their works interpreted; or how great virtuosos, like Paderewski, Rosenthal and other pianists, play them; or gifted instructors in music, like Carl Reinecke, would have them performed. It's like taking lessons in interpretation from these people.

“There's another matter that will interest you. Take pieces like Rubinstein's ‘Melody in F’ or the best known selection from his ‘Kammenoi, Ostrow,’ where the melody lies, in the former in between the accompaniment, in the latter below it—you recall, of course, how the accompanying figure hovers above it. In pieces like these it is important that the melodic line should be clearly distinguished, otherwise it will be smothered. Fortunately an attachment to the instrument, the Themodist, enables you to bring out

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

the melody and, at the same time does not prevent your retarding or accelerating the general movement of the piece or of varying the volume of sound as much as you like.

“While I’ve had the instrument only a little while, I’ve been struck with something else. I find that you can accomplish a good deal through what I may call ‘foot-technique,’ varying the degree of strength with which you use the pedals that pump in the air. By this means you can play louder or softer at will and by a sharp pressure emphasize individual chords and phrases. This, I find, makes the interpretation seem more personal than when I use the sustaining and soft levers alone. Altogether I’m beginning to look upon myself as a virtuoso, and the best thing you can do, old man, is to take my advice and become one too.”

Fortunately you are musical enough and

THE PIANOLIST

intelligent enough to appreciate the philosophy and significance of the instrument—that it supplies what you haven't got, the technique, but that you give it the expression, the soul; that although it is not a pianoforte, but an attachment to that instrument, nevertheless, in playing it, you express something of yourself, something of your inner being, something of your higher artistic nature through it.

There is a large class of people to whom the "piano-player" is or should be a great boon. I mean those who play the pianoforte, but not well enough to play publicly or professionally. To this class belong the thousands of music teachers and the amateurs. The majority of them may be more truly musical than many of the virtuoso pianists, but they are lacking in technique. For the technical standard is growing higher every year. Comparatively few music teach-

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

ers have much opportunity of hearing music, the result being that they find it difficult to keep up with the times. They become old-fashioned, and in these progressive days to become old-fashioned means to be forced to "drop out." They lack the technique to run through the modern repertoire, and the time to hear others in it. It hardly is necessary to point out what the Pianola, which gives them complete technical mastery of the keyboard, should be to them.

As regards the amateur I can cite my own case as an example. I had progressed on the pianoforte until I was able to play Liszt's arrangement of the Spinning Song from Wagner's "Flying Dutchman." It is a difficult piece, but there is a great deal of pianoforte music that is more difficult and that was entirely beyond me. Moreover the fact that I was able to play this composition after much assiduous practice, did not

THE PIANOLIST

mean that I could play equally difficult or even considerably less difficult music with ease by sight. The repertoire of even the best amateur is apt to be a small one. He gains his general knowledge of music from what he hears.

With me, in time, as with so many amateurs, pianoforte playing had to yield first place to my regular work. I took up writing and that became paramount. I began to lose my pianoforte technique, and I should not like to say how many years it is since I lost the ability to play Liszt's arrangement of the Spinning Song from the "The Flying Dutchman," the "Butterfly" etude of Chopin and other works that I had had at my fingers' ends. Often, when I went to pianoforte recitals and heard these compositions played, I grieved over what I had lost—through sacrificing the pianoforte to the pen.

PLAYING MUSIC YOURSELF

I grieve no longer. I have acquired a perfect technique, the technique of a great virtuoso—through the Pianola. It is a key that has unlocked for me the whole repertory of music. With it I can play the most difficult work ever written as easily as I can a five-finger exercise. It gives me the technique, but all that is summed up in the one word “expression,” I am at liberty to put into the music myself.

In the whole world there are perhaps two, at the most three pianoforte virtuosos who really deserve to be called great. To listen to them is the acme of musical delight. But right next to this comes the performance of any musical person, whether a child or grown up, on the Pianola. It is better than the playing of any virtuoso not absolutely of the very first rank, and infinitely preferable to the playing of the most gifted amateur, while the performance of the average

THE PIANOLIST

amateur almost is juvenile compared with it. Moreover there are pieces of which the Liszt "Campanella," the Mendelssohn "Rondo Capriccioso" and the "Rosamunde" impromptu of Schubert, are examples, that, when played on the Pianola by a musical person, sound just as well as if they came from under the fingers of the greatest living virtuoso—possibly better.

These are not dreams, they are facts; and discoverable in due time by everyone who is made musical through the instrument of which I am writing; and, in an incredibly short time by any one, already musical, who takes it up. Moreover they are facts readily susceptible of explanation, and here it is:—All technical difficulties being eliminated by the Pianola, the player is free to give his whole attention to interpretation, to that subtle something which we call "expression," and which constitutes the supreme quality of a musical performance.

III. FIRST STEPS OF THE MUSICAL NOVICE

I CONFESS that when I first thought of writing this book my intention was to plan it somewhat on the same lines as the usual "How to Listen to Music" book, but to make it somewhat simpler. As the catalogue of Pianola music includes everything from Bach to Richard Strauss it seemed to me that it would be easy to give the reader a course in musical development, beginning with the simpler pieces of Bach, like the bourrées and gavottes; then taking up the sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven; the compositions of the romantic school from Schubert to Chopin; and ending with the modern school of Wagner, Liszt and Richard Strauss—in other words giving a survey of the whole evolution of music.

This would coincide with the ordinary course of musical instruction, which naturally ranges from what are considered the

THE PIANOLIST

easier and simpler pieces to the more difficult ones, early music being less complicated and making less demand upon the player's technique than music of the present day. But I had forgotten one important point which is, that on the Pianola nothing is difficult, that with this modern instrument the question of difficulty entirely disappears, and that the most hair-raising, breath-catching exploits of virtuosity are as easy for the pianolist as the most commonplace five-finger exercises are for the pianist. In other words, the Pianolist can approach music from a wholly new standpoint. For him music exists simply as music. Its history, its evolution, which latter after all is a matter purely technical, need not concern him at all.

I was brought to this view by a rather startling discovery. I think it will seem equally startling to any one who has stud-

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

ied music in the usual way—the laborious technical development involved in acquiring the mastery of a musical instrument, generally the pianoforte. In discussing Chopin's "Etude" in A flat, Op. 10, No. 10, one of the greatest virtuosos of his day, Hans van Bülow, said that "he who can play this study in a really finished manner may congratulate himself on having climbed to the highest pinnacle of the pianist's Parnassus, as it is perhaps the most difficult piece of the entire set. The whole repertory of piano music does not contain a study of perpetual movement so full of genius and fancy as this particular one is universally acknowledged to be, excepting perhaps Liszt's 'Feux Follets' (Will-o'-the-wisps)." In looking over the catalogue of music for the mechanical piano-player I find that this immensely difficult study by Liszt, so difficult that Von Bülow classes

THE PIANOLIST

it with the Chopin study, "the highest pinnacle of the pianist's Parnassus," is listed with the "popular" pieces. Thus a composition which taxes the resources of the greatest virtuosos to the utmost and which few if any amateurs can play at all, presents no difficulties whatsoever to the Pianolist and actually becomes "popular." The same thing is true of the Liszt "Bell Rondo" (La Campanella). This delicate, dainty yet immensely difficult work, which most amateurs know only from hearing it played in pianoforte recitals because they themselves can do no more than stumble through it, is, like the "Feux Follets," a popular piece in the repertory of the Pianolist. Such an astounding result is possible only upon the Pianola which absolutely eliminates all technical difficulties and leaves the player free to select his music without regard to such difficulties.

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

Another matter connected with the Pianolist's repertory opens up a field for speculation into which, fortunately, it is quite possible for the layman to follow the musician and to appreciate the point I wish to make. As many purchasers of Pianolas are people who never have received musical instruction, it might be supposed that the most popular selections for the instrument would be either bits of musical slang like twosteps and ragtime, or, at the best, simple pieces in the recognized classical forms. But the result of the spread of musical taste through this new instrument is wholly different and wholly novel from the standpoint of conventional musical experience. The public, the great musical public created by an instrument which does away with all considerations of technique and leaves the player free to select what he wants to play, no matter how difficult it may be when

THE PIANOLIST

played on the pianoforte, sweeps aside all conventions which learned commentators, critics and writers on the history and evolution of music have sought to establish and in fact have succeeded in establishing for those who have been obliged to study music in the ordinary way, and boldly selects as first choice from the vast array of compositions Liszt's "Rhapsodie Hongroise" No. 2, with the "Tannhäuser" overture of Wagner a close second. In other words the musical public when left to itself and not led—or led astray—by pedants begins at the right end of musical evolution which is the end, the supreme efflorescence, and not the beginning. Conceding that the evolution of the human race began with the monkey and ends with ourselves, it may be said, metaphorically, that the musical public, when left to itself, declines to monkey with the monkey, but at once proceeds to pluck

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

the full flower of evolution, the human. For if any musical compositions are human documents that term is applicable to the "Second Rhapsody" and to the "Tannhäuser" overture. Each tells a vivid story and tells it according to the canons of art, life and truth. The unfortunate student of music, shackled by instruction that aims mainly at teaching him how to play an instrument and ignores the higher side of art, plods through the classical repertory until he gets an idea that music consists of nothing but symphonies and sonatas, which is as absurd as it would be to say that poetry consists of nothing but sonnets, whereas a couple of dozen good sonnets are enough for the literature of any language.

Indeed, while instruction in the other arts steadily is being modernized and steadily aims to familiarize the student with their higher aspects, little progress has been made

THE PIANOLIST

in the teaching of music. It still is in a state comparable only with that which existed in the teaching of languages when instruction in these was given according to the system of Ollendorf, with its series of foolish questions and answers:—

“Is this the sword of the grandfather?”

“No, it is the false curl of the grandmother.”

A five finger exercise, or an old-fashioned technical study with its dry little theme in the treble and its foolish little answer in the base, always suggests to me something along the lines of the Ollendorffian phraseology:—

“Is this musical phrase beautiful?”

“No, but it is great for limbering up the little finger.”

Often since giving thought to the new instrument which wholly eliminates the question of technique from pianoforte playing,

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

I have wondered if the importance attached to "limbering up the little finger" has not given us a wrong musical perspective; whether compositions musically of little value have not assumed enormous importance in the curriculum and been retained there, because they developed finger facility in certain directions. For example to a pianist the "School of Velocity" by Czerny and the "Gradus ad Parnassum" by Clementi, two series of famous technical studies, mean everything. To the Pianolist they mean nothing—need mean nothing. As for the "School of Velocity" he can by simply moving the tempo lever to the right make the Pianola play so fast that, if old Czerny still were alive, he would lose his breath listening to it. As for the "Gradus ad Parnassum," the difficulties which Clementi piled up in the pianist's path, the Pianolist overleaps as lightly and casually

THE PIANOLIST

as if wholly unaware of their existence. He may never have heard of these technical works yet, if he has natural musical instinct or has developed it through the piano-player, he will be as correct in his judgment of what to play and how to play it, as if he had devoted his whole life to an arduous study of pianoforte technique. The Pianolist's experience with music is wholly musical, while the pianist's is largely technical. For observe, that while a music teacher often selects a piece for his pupil, not so much because it is beautiful but because it follows up and supplements the technical exercise which the pupil has been practicing, the Pianolist's point of view in choosing his repertory is not obscured by any consideration of this kind. Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar; scratch musical instruction of the average kind and you find technique. The Pianolist's prog-

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

ress is determined by music's appeal to his soul; the average music pupil's by what he can accomplish with his fingers. In this way, as I already have suggested, certain pieces have acquired an importance far out of proportion to their musical value, and have retained their position not only in the curriculum but, unfortunately, even in the concert repertory.

There is a lot of this dry wood in music and the unfortunate student is compelled to chop it until, when he sees a real tree, he thinks it is all wrong because it has green leaves instead of withered ones and strong, sappy branches instead of little twigs that snap off at the least touch. This is the reason that modern music, although it is the most natural music ever written, has to be "explained"—because students prejudiced by pedantic instruction have become so accustomed to the artificial that they cannot

THE PIANOLIST

appreciate what is natural; just as experts in primitive art fail to appreciate the beauty of the later schools of painting.

To me it is positively exhilarating that the great mass of those people who have become devotees of the mechanical pianoplayer do not stop to ask what is the relation of this or that composition to the development of music or its place in musical evolution; but, taking music simply as music, confidently place pieces like the "Second Rhapsody" or the "Tannhäuser" overture on the Pianola and are thrilled by the artistic realism of these compositions. Unconsciously they are supporting the contention of those advanced thinkers in music who place the expression of life and truth above artificial form. Suppose a paint brush were invented which would give complete mastery of the technique of painting to the person in whose hand it was placed. Would

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

that person go to work copying the old masters? No. He would paint the sea, the low meadow land, the foot hills, the mountains, the waving grain, the forest, the man he admired, the woman he loved. And so it is that the player who has the technical mastery of the pianoforte placed, so to speak, at his disposal, is led by instinct toward the most modern expression of musical thought and genius.

In his book, "The Temple of Art," Ernest Newlandsmith has a chapter on musical education in which he points out that after all a pianist's fingers and muscles are simply mechanical contrivances for striking the keys, and that to gain complete control or mastery of this mechanical process requires incessant drudgery and labor, such mastery being attained only by very few people. "The average pianist never gains the power of even striking the notes in really difficult

THE PIANOLIST

music; yet for an artist to infuse the exact expression of his feeling into a work, he must not only be able to do this, but must also be able to vary this striking of notes by the most minute and subtle degrees of intensity, and that without experiencing any difficulty whatever, so that his entire attention may be devoted to his feeling." All this the Pianolist gains without any of that drudgery so apt to obscure correct musical perspective, so that, to quote again from Mr. Newlandsmith, "it is a matter of wonder that any one can be found to speak against mechanical piano-players, when they remember that they are only mechanical to the extent that a pianist has to be. They are not intended to play of themselves, like a musical box, but are controlled by the performer's feeling."

I now pass from general consideration of the subject to more specific ones.

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

The first steps in music are apt to be "two-steps." Marches and dances of a popular kind and the seemingly inevitable coon-song may be regarded as the infant's food of the musical novice. For a person whose love of music still is latent, may not "arrive" at once at the "Second Rhapsody" or the "Tannhäuser" overture. The friend to whom I have dedicated this book began with the lightest kind of music, the kind he now regards as "trash." For from knowing nothing at all about music, he has become, through the piano-player, an ardent lover of all that is good in the art. Nevin's "Narcissus" happened to be included in his first set of rolls. He tried it over, but thought it dull. After a while, however, when the other rolls began to pall on him, he played it again and found in it something that he missed in the others. This was the first step toward better things, and step by

THE PIANOLIST

step thereafter he gained in musical taste until now his judgment is unerring.

Nevin whose death ten years ago and at a comparatively early age, was a distinct loss to music, was one of the small number of composers who have written music of the lighter kind which yet is thoroughly good, music that is pleasing without being trivial, melodious without a suggestion of the commonplace, and thoroughly sound in workmanship. This American composer was exceptionally apt at reproducing in music a mood or fancy and at painting in tone the charms of a romantic locality. Possibly no gentler rise from what is known as the "light classic" to the classic can be provided than through him. Therefore I begin with him, although he is a thoroughly modern composer, my aim being gradually to lead the Pianolist from enjoyment of lighter works, of the kind, however, which

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

possess genuine musical merit, to an appreciation of the greater masterpieces. Sometimes I have selected only one work by a composer and, except in the case of Chopin, never more than a few examples from any composer. But the works which I cite and describe in more or less detail, should suffice to stimulate the pianolist to explore more fully the range of the composers I mention, and of others. I give merely a taste; the catalogue of music rolls supplies the full menu.

To some this arrangement may seem haphazard. Nevertheless it has system and purpose. The usual method followed in books that aim to be musical guides would have been much easier. Mine I believe best adapted to the needs of the average pianolist, who, it may be assumed, at the time he purchases his instrument, knows little or nothing about music of the higher

THE PIANOLIST

kind; whose taste, in fact, still is to be developed.

I cannot imagine any one so obtuse to musical impressions as not to find Nevin's "Valse Caprice," Op. 6, No. 1, thoroughly delightful. It is the first of a set of several pieces comprised in his sixth work, this fact being expressed by the designation Opus 6, No. 1. The piece is full of pretty sentiment and I always like to imagine that it describes an episode during a dance. It has charming melodies. Ornamental figurations in the accompaniment, now above, now below, give the effect of whispered questions and answers during the dance. The questions—put by the man—are pressing and ardent, the answers—from the girl—playful and parrying. Sometimes they even ripple with chaff. Yet, toward the end of the dainty little composition, they become tinged with sentiment, as if she were afraid she

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

might have gone a little too far and might "spoil things" and thought it just as well to let him know in time that, after all, she was not turning a wholly deaf ear to his pleading.

This piece I would follow with Nevin's "Intermezzo," Op. 7, No. 3. Although it belongs to an entirely different work I enjoy playing it immediately after the waltz and imagining that it relates to the same young couple—that he has led her out into the conservatory or on to a terrace overlooking a moonlight garden and under these romantic circumstances, is urging his suit more persistently than before. She, however, is a little too fond of flirting to let her real sentiments be known at once. But when, as if giving up the riddle in her dancing eyes and seemingly mocking smile, he appears about to lead her back into the ballroom, there is, at least so I like to read

THE PIANOLIST

the music, a pretty little laugh, as much as to say, "Can't you read my real feelings under my mask of banter," a tender glance indicated by a retard on a charmingly expressive little turn of the melody—and she is in his arms.

Now I would repeat the waltz, to indicate that, carried away by their happiness, they have gone back into the ballroom and thrown themselves heart and soul into the dance. And there you have a little Nevin suite telling a pretty story.

To me one of this composer's most fanciful tone paintings is, "In my Neighbor's Garden," Op. 21, No. 2. This is one of a series of pieces the complete title of which is "May in Tuscany," and which he composed during a sojourn in Florence. You can hear a bird sing all through this piece, and that the composer so intended it, became clear to me when I found that its original

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

title was "Rusignuolo," Italian for nightingale.

Make haste to mount, thou wistful moon,
Make haste to wake the nightingale:
Let silence set the world in tune
To harken to that wordless tale
Which warbles from the nightingale.

Those lines from Christina Rosetti's "Bird Raptures," seem to me perfectly reflected in Nevin's composition, and equally so are these lines from the same poet's "Twilight Calm":—

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

Or this from Byron's "Parisina":—

It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard;
It is the hour when lovers' vows
Seem sweet in every whisper'd word.

THE PIANOLIST

Nevin's "Barcarolle" is another beautiful composition, which conveys the listener to Venice with its picturesque canals and ancient palaces. It is a night scene, and reminds me of Wagner's description of the singing of the gondoliers at night in one of his letters from Venice: "Ah, music on the canal. A gondola with gaily colored lights, singers and players. More and more gondolas join it. The flotilla, barely moving, gently gliding, floats the whole width of the canal. At last, almost imperceptibly, it makes the turn of the bend and vanishes. For a long while I hear the tones beautified by the night. Finally the last sound, dying away, seems to dissolve itself into the moonlight, which beams softly on, like a visible realm of music."

There is an entire Venetian suite by Nevin which he composed during a stay in the Italian city. One day he gave his gondolier

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

a day off, and the boatman took his sweetheart, who lived on the mainland and never had been in Venice, through the waterways. It was this which suggested to Nevin the composition of the suite, which he entitled "A Day in Venice." The best known number from it is the "Venetian Love Song."

Moskowszki is another good composer of light music, and like Nevin, what he writes is thoroughly original. His "Serenata" Op. 15, No. 1, is one of the prettiest of modern pieces, and a perfect example of what a serenade should be—a graceful melody over an accompaniment of guitarlike chords. There is an intervening part with much ornamentation, which has the effect of improvising, a delicious little run leading back to the first melody which now should be played very softly and with slight retardations, as if the serenader were departing and the music dying away. "From

THE PIANOLIST

Foreign Parts," Moskowszki's Op. 23, is one of the best known modern compositions. It consists of several numbers each representing a country and composed in true national style and with as much success as if, were such a thing possible, the composer were a native of each of these countries and were thoroughly imbued with its spirit. Of these separate numbers I am inclined especially to recommend to the Pianolist "Germany," with its beautiful, broad, sustained melody, thoroughly German in contour and expression, and among the most beautiful melodies composed in modern times; and "Spain," one of the most brilliant little rolls for the piano-player—gay, spirited and full of snap and go, the movement never flagging from beginning to end. Moskowszki has shown himself most happy in catching the spirit of Spanish music. He has a book of Spanish dances and two Spanish albums

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

full of music of most varying mood, yet every mood characteristic of Spain and its people, now gay, now languorous, now dashing, now subdued, now softly whispering, now full of verve and passion, like the "Bolero," the fifth of the "Spanish Dances," Op. 12, with its sharply accentuated rhythm and dashing melody, which toward the end fairly swirls with excitement.

A "Moment Musical," Op. 7, No. 2, was the composition which gave Moskowszki his first taste of international fame, but in spite of much that is genuinely beautiful, especially in its opening melody, I think the work suffers from undue length. By all means, however, the Pianolist should not neglect this composition. Were I asked, however, to select the work which seems to me to bring out in the most favorable relief Moskowszki's traits as a composer it would be his "Waltz," Op. 34, No. 1. It has an

THE PIANOLIST

introduction beginning with a phrase in the bass like a man asking the honor of a dance with an attractive girl, followed by a little upward run, the gleam of the smile with which she gives assent. Then there are short, crisp, bright phrases, as though she enjoyed the knowledge that every one is looking at her as he leads her out and whispers compliments.

The introduction with all these interesting preliminaries over, the waltz itself opens with a melody full of sentiment and almost personal in its persistent suggestion of wooing. At the same time it has a graceful swing that carries it along like an undercurrent, with rising and falling inflections, and, like the Nevin waltz, with much dainty ornamentation, as if the couple were conversing in low tones while dancing. Then there is a brilliant episode when individuals seem lost sight of in the general vividness

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

of the scene with its gaily colored costumes and flash of jewels. There are alternating sentimental passages until, toward the end, the first melody bursts into a fortissimo—a great rising inflection, insistent and impassioned—then a final pitch of excitement as all seem to throw themselves into the whirl and the waltz reaches a brilliant end. While Nevin in the waltz which I selected from among his works, appears to tell the story of two people, Moskowszki here places before our eyes a vivid ballroom scene with one particularly handsome couple as the center of attraction, without, however, letting us wholly into their secret. The waltz, though long, is of never-flagging interest.

This composer's opus 34 is an orchestral suite ("Première Suite d'Orchestre") of which the second number is an "Allegretto giojoso," a playful, sportive, chic and graceful movement, with a tender melody in the

THE PIANOLIST

middle part, at first heard alone, then with a sparkling accompaniment. This piece having originally been scored for orchestra, it is quite possible to detect orchestral instruments like flutes and clarionets in some of the brilliant runs. The Pianola roll is a reproduction of an arrangement for four hands, that is, for two players at one piano, yet only one player is required to produce the full effect of a pianoforte duet arranged from an orchestral composition.

Moskowszki is a prolific composer, and it is well worth the Pianolist's while to thoroughly explore the catalogue of his works. Much modern music merely echoes what has gone before and may be summed up as watered Chopin. Therefore, even if Moskowszki's compositions are in the lighter forms, their originality and melodiousness make them worthy of ranking high among modern salon pieces.

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

One of the prettiest and deservedly popular little works in the modern repertory is the Paderewski "Minuet," Op. 14, No. 1. Modern minuets are echoes of the classical period. Compositions of this kind are to be found in the sonatas and symphonies of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and even further back in the suites of Bach. Accordingly the Paderewski "Minuet," in keeping with the form, is simple and clear-cut and gracefully melodious. At the same time, however, it is modern in the brilliant ornamentation introduced in the middle part of the composition which in a minuet is called the trio.

The minuet was a stately dance. The word is derived from the French menu meaning small and referring to the short steps taken in the dance. Originally the music to it was brief, but as a complement, a second minuet was added which, in time,

THE PIANOLIST

became the trio, so-called, because it was written in three part harmony. This was followed by a repetition of the first minuet. While the designation trio has been retained to this day, the three part harmony no longer is considered obligatory. The minuet is one of the very few of the older dance forms which have not become obsolete.

It was a square dance, the steps consisting of a coupée (a salute to one's partner, while resting on one foot and swinging the other backward and forward) a high step and a balance. In the Paderewski minuet the stately, ceremonious character of this dance is preserved together with its old fashioned, naïve grace and charm. It is quite possible while playing it to see the dancers at a French court ball or in the ballroom of some chateau, the women, beauties of their day, in high pompadour with puffs and curls powdered white, with petites mouches, little moon

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

and star-shaped beauty spots, on their faces; square cut bodices, lace stomachers, paniers over brocaded skirts with lace panels; feet encased in high heel satin slippers with jewelled buckles; and gracefully managing their ostrich feather fans as they curtsy to their partners; the latter wearing wigs also powdered white, long coats of brocade, elaborately embroidered waistcoats with lace jabots, satin knee breeches, silk stockings and a garter with jewelled buckle on the right leg, and helping themselves to snuff out of gold or silver boxes during brief pauses in the dance. Such is the picture that can be conjured up in imagination while playing the Paderewski minuet.

Quite different yet equally effective in its way is his "Cracovienne Fantastic," Op. 14, No. 6. The cracovienne is a Polish dance for a large and brilliant company and just as Paderewski recalled in his minuet the

THE PIANOLIST

stately assemblage of days long past, so in his *cracovienne* he gives us a brilliant picture of a ballroom scene in his native Poland when that country was still in its glory and not partitioned among three nations of Europe. The reiteration of its characteristic rhythm gives it peculiar fascination. It is clearly and distinctly melodious, with bright, flashing runs giving it brilliancy.

Again different in style from any of the preceding are the works of Cécile Chaminade. Not only is this composer a woman, she is a French woman and, like a French woman, essentially clever and chic. She may be a trifle more superficial than the composers I have mentioned, but her music is clean-cut, clear as a crystal, and, like everything about a refined woman, the quintessence of neatness. It is quite as if Mme. Chaminade's maid laid out her musical thoughts as well as her dresses, being

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

sure to have every frill and furbelow in its place, whether it be the robe d'interieur which she is to wear at breakfast, her robe de ville for calling, or her robe de soirée. True it is that serious musicians are apt to wear a somewhat supercilious expression at mention of her music and to pronounce it clever rather than deep, yet it is equally true that it takes its place among the best salon pieces of the day and gains value if only from the fact that this bright French woman has skillfully refrained from attempting flights for which her graceful wings are not strong enough. Most of her music is characterized by a fascinating archness and coquetry and requires quick and sudden changes in time for its proper interpretation. While rarely attempting the larger musical forms, she has been an industrious student of the best music, so that all her compositions are what is called "well made," correct ac-

THE PIANOLIST

according to the rules of musical science, yet in melodic and harmonic inspiration characterized by originality and musical inventiveness. She writes with judgment, refinement and taste, avoiding on the one hand the pitfall of pretentiousness, and, on the other, the monotony of platitude found in the works of those who compose in the larger forms but lack the originality to fill them with new and interesting matter. It is a great thing to know your limitations, yet to be able to do vivid and original work within them.

Brief as is Chaminade's "Serenade," Op. 29, its melody is charming, it is ably harmonized and it appeals to the heart. There is not a commonplace bar in it. It is one of those delicate bits of inspiration which survive other and seemingly grander works, the grandeur of which, however, is in course of time, discovered to be mere hollow pre-

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

tentiousness. It is a capital example of the manner in which this composer writes in the small genre—delicate, refined and sensitive.

She has been highly successful in compositions in dance form, managing these without a suggestion of the trivial. Thus her "Air de Ballet," Op. 30, No. 1, is full of brilliancy and nervous energy without ever degenerating into vulgar noisiness. Another "Air de Ballet" by her from the ballet "Callirhoe," to which her widely known "Scarf Dance" also belongs, is crisp, bright and dainty. "Callirhoe" is a ballet-symphonique for stage performance and its production showed her to be so well grounded in her art that it does not suffer even under the pressure of rapid composition, or of being obliged to work "on time." The commission for this ballet was offered to Godard, a well-known French composer. He was, however, occupied with an opera and de-

THE PIANOLIST

clined the work, at the same time recommending that the commission be offered to Chaminade. It was accepted by her and within six weeks from the day when she began work upon it, it was completed even to the scoring for orchestra.

While the Pianolist hardly can go amiss in choosing from among the list of Chaminade's compositions I may mention as especially characteristic her "Arabesque," "Humoresque," La Lisonjera (Flatterer) "Pierrette," "Scaramouche" (Mountebank) and "Spinning Wheel."

Chaminade's compositions are so popular in this country yet so little is known about her personally, that I have secured a few personal data concerning her from my friend, Mr. Percy Mitchell, who is attached to the staff of an American paper in Paris. Mme. Carbonel-Chaminade has a shock of dark, curly, short-cropped hair which gives her a

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

boyish aspect, a touch of masculinity further emphasized by a tailor-made costume with stiff, white, turned-down collar and loosely tied scarf. Beyond this aspect, however, there is nothing mannish about her. She cares neither for sport nor exercise in general; her principal occupation is musical composition, her chief relaxation practicing the pianoforte two hours a day; and she reads an immense amount of poetry from which she carefully selects the words for her songs. Society she abhors, but she attends scrupulously to her large correspondence. Very many of these letters come from America, and in a practical spirit truly American seek information regarding the interpretation of her works. "How should your 'Serenade' be phrased?—I am learning the 'Scarf Dance.' By this same mail I am sending you a copy of it. Would you kindly mark the phrasing in it and return

THE PIANOLIST

it to me?" In connection with questions of this kind it is interesting to note that practically all of Chaminade's compositions have been metrostyled for the Pianola by the composer herself. The Pianolist at least will not find it necessary to trouble her with questions like the above.

Probably no composer has had one set method of work. It is apt to vary according to surroundings. So with Chaminade. She may write while seated at her piano-forte, testing her thoughts on the keyboard and even working them out in detail before putting them on paper. Or she may sit at her table, a vast velvet-covered affair taking up nearly half of her studio. Sometimes an idea that has haunted her for weeks may take definite shape while she is speeding on a train to fulfill a concert engagement and she will jot it down in spite of the roar and vibration of railway travel. As the

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

train rushes on the composition may be completely worked out in the composer's mind before the journey's end, and so retentive is Chaminade's memory that, when she returns to her villa in Vésinet, near the forest of St. Germain not far from Paris, she can seat herself at her table and copy the work from that mental vision of it which she had on the train.

Some years ago during a semi-professional tour which she made through Roumania, Servia and Greece, she was invited to play for the students of the Athens conservatory. When she stepped on the stage she saw row after row of young people armed with the printed music of what she was about to play and prepared in a cold-blooded, business-like way to open the music of the first number on the program and to follow the concert note for note from the printed scores from beginning to end. Imagine the effect

THE PIANOLIST

upon her nerves produced by the rustling of one hundred pages all being turned at the same instant at intervals during the concert; and even now she laughingly confesses that she was nearly overcome with stage fright and prays she may never have to endure again such an ordeal as the music students of Athens unwittingly prepared for her.

With the exception of Nevin, the composers whose works I have mentioned are living and actively engaged in composition. The piece to which I now desire to call the pianolist's attention belongs to the dawn of the romantic period in music. It was composed by Weber who died in 1826, is entitled "Invitation to the Dance," was written a few months after his happy marriage with the opera singer Caroline Brandt, and is dedicated to "My Caroline." Because Weber was one of the first composers who

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

rank as great to give distinctly descriptive titles to compositions, and because of certain other characteristics in his works, he is regarded as the founder of the romantic school of music—music which is not simply sufficient unto itself but has a secondary meaning that adds immeasurably to its interests; music which seeks to suggest a definite mood and even to throw a realistic picture of some scene in nature or some human experience upon a background of harmony and instrumental coloring; and which cares less for the artifices of form than for the expression of the true and the beautiful from the standpoint of modern art.

The “Invitation to the Dance” derives further interest from the fact that it was the first composition to lift the waltz, which up to that time had been employed simply as an accompaniment for dancing, to the level of other legitimate and recognized

THE PIANOLIST

artistic musical forms. The composition opens with an introduction in slow time, the first phrase unmistakably being the voice of the man conveying to the lady an invitation to dance. You hear her playful objection—undoubtedly she wants to be asked a second time—the repetition of his invitation, her assent, the short dialogue as the two step out on the floor; brief, but resonant precluding chords; then the free, elastic rhythm of the waltz followed by its gay, dashing melody. There is an exuberance of runs and ornamentations until the first feeling of elation lapses into a second dreamy, languorous waltz melody, as if the dancers were floating on the scented atmosphere of the ballroom. In portions of this there is a sentimental colloquy between the couple whom we met in the introduction, the two voices being clearly differentiated. The little duet between them adds to the beauty

FIRST STEPS OF NOVICE

and interest of this portion of the work, the melody of which simply is exquisite. Then everything whirls and sparkles again and, when the dance has ceased, there is a briefer recapitulation of the introduction, the lady is led back to her seat, and the episode comes to an end.

The Pianolist may now place Liszt's "Campanella" (Bell rondo) on the instrument. Originally this was composed by the famous violinist Paganini. Liszt transcribed it for the pianoforte and so successfully that now it is better known in his version than in its original form. It is a piece which can be described only by one word—delicious. Its title is immediately understood by the unmistakable silvery tinkle of a bell in the high treble, constantly recurring, but always with added instead of diminishing, beauty. On the pianoforte it demands virtuosity of the highest rank, yet

THE PIANOLIST

for the Pianolist it is as easy to play as is the simplest pianoforte piece intended for a beginner.

And so, having begun this chapter with Nevin, one of the lighter composers of pronounced merit, the Pianolist already finds himself playing a work by Weber and another by Liszt, two of the most famous figures in musical history. Even if, as I trust will be the case, he becomes so interested in the works I have cited in this chapter, as to try much other music by the same composers, he will, in an almost incredibly short space of time, be ready for the thrill of the great masters—which shows that, after all, the sequence I am following in this book is not as haphazard as some may think.

IV. THE THRILL OF THE GREAT MASTERS

IN his choice of music the Pianolist need not pause to consider the slow evolution of the art from the simple to the more complex, since for him nothing is complex. Thus he is free to disregard all traditions, even such an absurd one, for example, as that which insists that a sonata or symphony should be played as a whole, that, if a work in this form consists of three or four movements, none of these should be "lifted" out of the whole and played as a separate composition.

The Pianolist calmly looks upon these movements as so many different pieces and chooses between them. Thus among the hundred classical compositions most in demand by Pianolists, the slow movement of Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" ranks seventeenth, while the first is as far down on the list as thirty-seventh, and the roll with the

THE PIANOLIST

last two movements as sixty-fifth. That in future the consensus of opinion of thousands of music lovers who are unhampered by pedantic tradition, will have immense influence in determining the standard of composers and of their several works, and will have immense effect in hastening the introduction and appreciation of works by new composers, in spite of opposition from the ultra-conservative element, goes without saying, and will be one of the most important factors in the revolution this new musical instrument is destined to effect.

All this readily can be appreciated when the attitude of this great musical public toward Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsodies" is taken into account. For years the critical camp has been divided on Liszt, some considering him a composer whose unequalled greatness as a player of the pianoforte led him to write music that was superficially

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

brilliant but barren of genuine musical inspiration. Others, like Henry T. Finck and that band of advanced commentators on music among whom I am proud to number myself, unhesitatingly rank him with the greatest composers. This phase of musical life, this warring of factions, the Pianolist happily ignores entirely, and following his unbiased intuition, places Liszt's second "Hungarian Rhapsody" at the head of the repertory, closely follows it with the twelfth and fourteenth, and, all told, includes nine of these fifteen compositions in the top list of one hundred pieces of serious music which have proved most popular with Pianola players. The Pianolist is not aware of the fact, but that most inexorable of all critics, time, most emphatically justifies his choice.

Liszt brought out these rhapsodies fifty-three years ago. They are not compositions

THE PIANOLIST

which suddenly are offering themselves as candidates for popular favor. For more than half a century has passed over these master works, which still are as fresh and modern as if they had been struck off but yesterday in the white heat of inspiration. Their roots go back even further than fifty-three years. As long ago as 1838 Liszt published them as short transcriptions of Hungarian tunes. Then he worked them over and, in 1846, issued them in somewhat more elaborate form as "Melodies Hongroises." Still further elaborated they became in 1854 the "Rhapsodies Hongroises" as we know them.

These rhapsodies reflect the weird romanticism of that most mysterious and fascinating of races, the Gypsies, as successfully as Chopin's music reflects the crushed aspirations of his unhappy country, Poland. Although they are called Hungarian, they are

86

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

neither derived from nor founded upon national Hungarian music, but are purely of Gypsy origin. The Hungarians, however, have adopted the Gypsies as their national musicians, and it is by reason of this adoption, or, in order to express through the title this mutual assimilation, that Liszt has called these rhapsodies "Hungarian." With a Gypsy parentage so authentic that he speaks of the melodies on which they are based, as "the songs without words" of the Gypsies, his rhapsodies form the only channel through which the intense inner life and mystic idealism of this strange race has found expression. They are the long suppressed cry of souls struggling for self utterance and they constitute nothing less than an epic, the "Iliad," of that strange race which centuries ago cast itself upon the continent of Europe like a wave coming, none knew from where or whither bound.

THE PIANOLIST

This race, as Liszt describes it in his book on Gypsy music, brought no memories, betrayed no hope; possessed no country, religion, history. Divided into tribes, hordes and bands, wandering hither and thither, following each the route dictated by chance, they still preserve under the most distant meridian, the same infallible rallying signs, the same physiognomy, the same language, the same traditions. The ages pass. The world progresses. Countries make war or peace, change masters and manners, but this people that shares the joys, the sorrows, the prosperity and the misfortunes of none other; that laughs at the ambitions, the tears, the combats of civilization; still obstinately clings to its hunger and its liberty, its tents and its tatters, and still exercises, as it has exercised for centuries, an indescribable and indestructible fascination upon poetic minds, passing it on as a mysterious legacy from age to age.

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

Such is the race of which Liszt recites the epic in the "Hungarian Rhapsodies." They portray the life, the scenes, the mood of the Gypsy camp, vividly, brilliantly, yet with an undercurrent of tragedy—the tragedy of homeless wanderers. Because they represent life, because they are true to life, because they depict life with a wonderful union of realism and beauty, they will, in spite of critical detraction, live as long as the Bach fugues, the Beethoven sonatas or the Wagner music dramas.

An elaborate musical analysis of these wonderful works would be futile. They are too racial, and in parts too pictorial to be dissected in narrative style. What I have said of the race from which they derive their characteristics should serve as a general explanation of their purport. The second, twelfth and fourteenth rhapsodies are admirable examples of the series. In gen-

THE PIANOLIST

eral these "Hungarian Rhapsodies" open with a few brief bars suggestive of tragic recitative, which leads into a broad yet strongly marked and searching rhythm, upon which is built a slow, stately yet mournful melody, broken in upon here and there by strange weird runs and rapid passages. These latter serve a double purpose. They imitate the curious æolian harp effects of the most characteristic instrument of the Gypsy orchestra, the cembalon, a large, shallow box with strings about as numerous as those of the pianoforte, and played with two little mallets, with which the player produces the weird arpeggios or rapid, broken chords and the improvised runs characteristic of Hungarian Gypsy music; and they also prepare the player and listener for the rapid movement into which the slow melody passes over, finally to dash into the very frenzy of emotional and physical excitement.

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

These three divisions, the slow movement introduced by a recitative, the rapid movement following, and the still more rapid one with which the rhapsodies generally end, are based upon three distinct kinds of melodies of the Gypsies, and their startling contrast contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The slow melody in the first part of the rhapsodies (a different melody in each rhapsody of course) is the "lassan," a sad song giving utterance to the pathos of the race. The dance music that follows, so full of playful humor, grace, caprice, coquetry and dashing contrast, is the "frischka"; while the delirium, almost demoniac in its fury, with which the rhapsody rushes to its intoxicating finale, and compared with which the Italian tarantella and even the Dervish dance of the East are tame, is the "czardas." In playing these rhapsodies one must try to imagine a Gypsy camp, the

THE PIANOLIST

flicker of firelight in the deep forest or on the wild plains of Hungary, a sense of loneliness or of vast distance, forms of swarthy men and women suddenly appearing from a shadowy background to be illumined for a moment in the light of the fire, their swaying, whirling forms vanishing the next, back into the vague darkness from which they issued. Of the "Hungarian Rhapsodies" hostile critics may say what they please; he who plays them understandingly, will feel in them the thrill of a great master.

A composition of impassioned, yet mournful beauty is Liszt's "Liebestraum" (Dream of Love) one of a set of three nocturnes, this one being based upon a well known German poem, Freiligrath's,

O love as long as love thou canst,

O love as long as love will keep;

The day will come, the day will come,

When at a grave you stand and weep.

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

Liszt's "At the Spring" is a charming composition somewhat in the same style as the "Campanella," but instead of describing silver-toned chimes of bells, reproducing the purl of a bosky spring. One hears the clear rippling water and sees its sparkling jets in glints of sunlight, as it dashes against the stones, and its shimmering spray. The work is the forerunner and model of numerous similar pieces, all of them, however, lacking its freshness and originality and its high order of musicianship.

The Pianolist who is led by the examples of Liszt's music which I have cited to choose liberally from the numerous compositions by him in the catalogue of music rolls, hardly can go amiss. If, however, he prefers to leave this for some other time, and to turn to another composer, he will find Mendelssohn's "Rondo Capriccioso," Op. 14, a capital roll. This rondo was com-

THE PIANOLIST

posed in 1826, the same year in which he wrote the overture to Shakespere's "Midsummer Night's Dream," with its wonderful depiction of fairy life. The "Rondo Capriccioso" might be part of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" music, it is so much in the same character. Nothing could be more crisp and dainty. It seems to depict elves romping through the forest by moonlight. Nor is it without romantic moods, as if love-making were going on even among these light-footed, light-hearted revelers. But when this is said, it still is all touch and go; a breath, a sigh, the iridescence of the moonglade on a woodland lake—then off and away:—

Over hill, over dale,
Through brush, through brier,
Over park, over vale,
Through flood, through fire,

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.

OR

Light as any wind that blows
So fleetly did she stir,
The flower she touch'd on dipt and rose,
And turned to look at her.

This "Rondo Capriccioso" is indeed a fascinating piece, written in its composer's most facile vein. It is one of the finest rolls from among which the Pianolist can select. There can be no doubt that Mendelssohn has been losing ground as compared with the enormous popularity which he enjoyed in his lifetime. But the pendulum has swung too much the other way. Certain of his compositions have been too much neglected. The "Rondo Capriccioso" is one of them. As it actually sounds

THE PIANOLIST

crisper and daintier on the Pianola than on the pianoforte no matter by whom played, it enjoys well merited popularity in the Pianolist's repertory and may contribute toward restoring the appreciation of Mendelssohn's music to its proper balance.

I would be greatly surprised if a beautiful work like Schubert's "Rosamunde" impromptu were not among the most popular pieces of the Pianolist's choice. The word impromptu is sufficiently self-explanatory, but it needs to be pointed out that this work of Schubert's differs from the usual impromptu in being an air with variations, the variations, however, giving the impression of free fantasies or improvisations on the original air. There are five variations and the composition ends with a repetition of the air.

The work is written in the truest Schubertian style. I like to fancy that the

96

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

melody with its serene, lyric beauty is a picture of the fair Rosamunde herself. The first variation, a plaintive melody over an agitated accompaniment, I should be inclined, still referring to Rosamunde and regarding each variation as expressing an experience in her life, to entitle "Moods." The second variation is more playful in character but without any loss of romantic charm, and I should say that we might call it an expression of her "Fancies." The third an impassioned meditation, a cry from the heart, Rosamunde's heart, may be called "Love." The fourth variation, which again is frankly playful like the second, is "Hope." The fifth, as brilliant as a cascade on which the sun is shining, is "Joy." It ends suddenly without coming to a full stop in the musical sense, and, after a pause, the original air now couched in broad and beautiful chords, begins in the

THE PIANOLIST

lower register, rises successively to the middle and higher ones, then dies away—an exquisite ending. Is this not Rosamunde, the more charming for the romance of which she is the heroine; Rosamunde, looking at her engagement ring, musing on the past and trustful of the future?

Schubert was one of the most famous song composers and Liszt in addition to being an original composer, rendered a great service to music by transcribing, in most admirable style, many of Schubert's most famous songs for pianoforte. Widely known as they are for voice, they have through these transcriptions become almost as familiar for pianoforte. The delicate and dainty "Hark, Hark the Lark" is a favorite work in Paderewski's repertory. So spontaneous was Schubert's inspiration that he wrote the music of this song at a tavern where he chanced to see the poem in a book which

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

he was examining. "If only I had some music paper!" he exclaimed. One of his friends promptly ruled lines on the back of his bill of fare and Schubert, with the varied noises of the tavern going on about him, jotted down the song then and there.

Another splendid Schubert song that has been made popular on the pianoforte through Listz's transcription is "The Erlking." As it ranks among the greatest songs, and by many people actually is considered the greatest, the illustration it affords of the rapidity with which Schubert worked is most interesting. Two friends calling upon him one afternoon, toward the close of the year 1815, found him all aglow reading "The Erlking" aloud to himself. Having read the poem, he walked up and down the room several times, book in hand, then suddenly dropped into a chair, and, without a moment's pause and as fast as his pen could travel over the

THE PIANOLIST

paper, composed the song. Schubert had no pianoforte, so the three men hurried over to the school where formerly he had been trained for the Imperial choir—this was in Vienna—and there “The Erlking” was sung the same evening and received with enthusiasm. Afterwards the Court organist played it over himself without the voice, and, some of those present objecting to the dissonances which depict the child’s terror of the Erlking, the organist struck these chords again and explained how admirably they expressed the situation described in the poem and how well they were worked out musically. Schubert was only thirty-one when he died and was only eighteen when he set this poem of Goethe’s to music, yet the whole song is almost Wagnerian in its descriptive and dramatic qualities, and its climax thrilling.

The work of Beethoven’s which seems

100

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

most to appeal to the Pianolist is the "Moonlight" sonata. Possibly the attractive title, which, however, Beethoven probably did not give to it, may have something to do with its selection. But why not attribute its popularity to the fact that the music bears out the title?

A sonata is a composition in several movements, usually four, and follows a clearly outlined, in fact, an almost rigid form, not to say formula. It attained its highest development during the classical period and left its impress upon all the larger compositions of that time, for a symphony is nothing more than a sonata composed for orchestra, instead of for the pianoforte, and trios, quartets, and other pieces of chamber music of the classical period are sonatas for the corresponding combination of instruments.

The "Moonlight Sonata," however, is less rigid in form than the average sonata.

THE PIANOLIST

In it, in fact, Beethoven may be said to have broken away from form, for after the word sonata he adds the qualifying phrase "quasi una fantasia," signifying that, although he calls the work a sonata, it has the characteristics of a free fantasy.

Instead of opening with the usual rapid movement, the work begins with a broad and beautiful slow one, a sustained melody, a poem of profound pathos in musical accents. This is followed by a lighter allegretto which Liszt called "a flower 'twixt two abysses," the second "abyss" being the last movement, which is one of Beethoven's most impassioned creations. At the end both of the first movement and of the allegretto the usual wait between the divisions of a sonata is omitted, Beethoven giving the direction "attacca subito il sequente," literally meaning "attack suddenly the following," indicating an inner relationship be-

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

tween the movements so close that there must be only the briefest possible pause between them.

This sonata is a true drama of life, a story of unrequited passion. It is dedicated to one of the great beauties of Beethoven's time, the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi. Although it is known that the composer subsequently was deeply in love with her cousin, the Countess Therese Brunswick, he is believed to have been in love with Giulietta at the time he wrote the "Moonlight Sonata." The countess was not insensible to his passion. She already was engaged to Count Gallenberg, but one day, coming excitedly into the presence of her cousin Therese, she threw herself at the latter's feet, "like a stage princess," and exclaimed: "Counsel me, cold, wise one! I long to give Gallenberg the mitten and marry the wonderfully ugly, wonderfully beautiful Beethoven, if only it did

THE PIANOLIST

not involve lowering myself socially." And so she gave up Beethoven and led a life, none too happy, with her Count. Connecting the "Moonlight Sonata" with this episode in Beethoven's life, the first movement of the sonata may appropriately be regarded as a song of love, deeply pathetic because no response is evoked by the longing it expresses. The second movement, the graceful allegretto, is the coquetish Giulietta who would not "lower herself socially" by marrying a genius. The third movement is the rejected lover crying out his passion and despair to the night.

From Beethoven to Grieg, from Vienna to Norway, from the greatest master of the classical period to a composer who still is living and who has been called not inaptly, "the Chopin of the North," may seem a long step. But the Pianolist can travel with seven league boots. Grieg's

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

most widely known compositions are four of the pieces of incidental music which he wrote to Ibsen's drama "Peer Gynt." Peer Gynt is the Faust of Norwegian literature. Without attempting here to follow up this parallel, it may be said that he is a curious combination of ne'er-do-well, dreamer and philosopher, with a pronounced streak of impishness running through his character and giving a touch of the extravagant and grotesque to many of his actions and to some of them even a suggestion of the weird and supernatural.

"Peer Gynt" has its roots in Norwegian folklore and was written by Ibsen in Italy when he was about thirty-seven years old, and it precedes the problem plays by which he is best known, although Peer's character is in itself a complex problem. Grieg in his incidental music, adroitly avoids the difficult task of interpreting or even hinting

THE PIANOLIST

at the curiously contradictory nature of the principal rôle in the play, one of the most interesting psychological studies in modern literature. His music deals with the more superficial aspects of the story and is pictorial rather than intellectual or profoundly emotional. The principal selections for the piano-player from the "Peer Gynt" music, are contained on two rolls with two selections to each roll. One of them gives the music of "Anitra's Dance" and "In the Hall of the Mountain King"; the other the scenes "Daybreak" and "Death of Aase." Were these selections to be arranged in the order in which they occur in the drama it would be necessary to begin with the "The Hall of the Mountain King" and follow this, in the order mentioned, with "Aase's Death," "Anitra's Dance" and "Daybreak." On the rolls, however, the pieces are not arranged in the order of their occurrence in

106

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

the play, but in the sequence which is most effective from a musical standpoint—just as in this book I have purposely refrained from following any set, historical sequence, but have adopted a purely musical method of guiding the Pianolist from music of the lighter kind to that of a more serious character.

“Anitra’s Dance” is an episode of the drama laid in Morocco which Peer has reached in the course of his wanderings. Anitra is a lithe-limbed daughter of the East who entrances Peer with her dancing, and, when he promises to endow her with a soul, promptly informs him that she would rather have the opal from his turban; gradually coaxes all his jewels from him; then swiftly throws herself upon his horse and gallops away, showing herself a true exemplar of the “eternal feminine,” so called, I presume, because it eternally is getting the

THE PIANOLIST

better of the eternal masculine. Be that as it may, "Anitra's Dance" is the very essence of witchery and grace. In the scene "In the Hall of the Mountain King" the trolls gather for the marriage of Peer to the Troll King's daughter. When Peer, at the last moment, refuses to go through the ceremony, the trolls dash at him. One bites himself fast to his ear. Others strike him. He falls. They throw themselves upon him in a heap. At this critical moment, when he is writhing beneath them in torture, the sound of distant church bells is heard, the trolls take to flight, the palace of the Mountain King collapses and Peer is standing alone on a mountain. The scene may be construed as one of his supernatural experiences, as a nightmare, or as the allegory of a stricken conscience. "Daybreak" which opens the second roll is in Egypt, Peer standing before the statue of Memnon

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

in the first hush of dawn and waiting for the rays of the rising sun to evoke the music which according to tradition many thousand years old, is drawn from the statue by the sunrise. In this number Grieg paints the colors of an Oriental daybreak rather than attempts to convey the thrill of an ancient sculpture, on the edge of the great desert, thrilling with song at the first kiss of the rising sun. In the "Death of Aase" Peer watches his mother's life slowly ebb away and seeks to divert her mind from death by grotesque tales, even throwing himself astride a chair and persuading her through subjective suggestion, that he is the forerider of a beautiful chariot in which she is seated, so that the poor woman, who all her life long has felt the pinch of penury, dies with a vision of wealth and glory before her eyes created for her by the son, worry over whom has hastened her death.

THE PIANOLIST

In keeping with the lyric trend of his genius, Grieg has ignored the grotesque and ghastly humor of the situation, and has contented himself with portraying its sombre and tragic aspect, his music being in character somewhat like a funeral march.

The Pianolist will find a characteristic Norwegian touch in Grieg's "Bridal Procession Passing By," Op. 19, No. 2, from his "Sketches from Norwegian Life." It begins with a curiously droning rhythm, played softly as though the procession were approaching from a distance. Over this rhythm is introduced a piquant march figure, hopping and skipping along as if the musicians were dancing at the head of the marchers. As the procession approaches and the music becomes louder, one hears in the bass an accentuation of the characteristic rhythm, like the tap of a bass drum. When the march has swelled to a forte, it sinks to

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

a brief piano, as if the winding path had led the procession away again. Then there is another brief outburst, this time fortissimo, as if the marchers were quite near; and then a pianissimo, as if they had passed behind a hill and almost out of hearing. The music grows loud again, the procession goes by, and there is a delicious effect as the march dies away in the distance, the rhythmic beats with which it opened becoming softer and softer, while the little hopping and skipping march-figure, somewhat curtailed, flutters over it.

Grieg's "Peer Gynt" suite was composed for orchestra, but was arranged for pianoforte by the composer. Notwithstanding the fact that in its original form the suite is intended to be played by a large body of instruments of different tone coloring and that arrangements for pianoforte of orchestral works usually are so complex that even great

THE PIANOLIST

pianists find difficulty in rendering them effectively, the "Peer Gynt" selections are among the most attractive in the Pianolist's repertory. For, through the instrument on which he plays, he is able to overcome the most complicated chords and the most difficult and complex runs, as easily as if they were music of the simplest kind. If the Pianola sometimes is called mechanical, the injustice thus done it is due to its super-human capacity of playing with perfect ease things that are wholly beyond the fingers even of the greatest virtuosos, yet can be rendered fluently and also expressively by the Pianolist who has genuine feeling for music.

It is this combination of technique and expression that gives to Liszt's enormously difficult pianoforte transcription of Saint-Säens' symphonic poem, "Danse Maccabre," which even for orchestra is an extremely

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

difficult piece, its place in the Pianolist's repertory. This is one of the most interesting of modern compositions, and most graphically descriptive of its subject, which is the "Dance of Death," "maccabre" being derived from the Arabic "makabir," which signifies a place of burial. Both in the literature and in the painting of the Middle Ages in Europe and particularly in church decoration, figures the legend that once a year on Hallowe'en the dead arose from their graves for a wild and hideous dance, with King Death himself as master of ceremonies. Saint-Saëns' symphonic poem realistically describes these scenes, and, as if to attribute the inspiration for his music to its precise origin, the composer has placed above his score a poem by Henri Cazalis. Mr. Edward Baxter Perry has made a free transcription of this poem, which, at the same time, serves capitally as a description of the music:

THE PIANOLIST

On a sounding stone,
With a blanched thigh-bone,
The bone of a saint, I fear,
Death strikes the hour
Of his wizard power,
And the specters haste to appear.

From their tombs they rise
In sepulchral guise,
Obeying the summons dread,
And gathering round
With obeisance profound,
They salute the King of the Dead.

Then he stands in the middle
And tunes up his fiddle,
And plays them a gruesome strain.
And each gibbering wight
In the moon's pale light
Must dance to that wild refrain.

Now the fiddle tells,
As the music swells,
Of the charnal's ghastly pleasures;
And they clatter their bones
As with hideous groans
They reel to those maddening measures.

THRILL OF GREAT MASTERS

The churchyard quakes
And the old abbey shakes
To the tread of that midnight host,
And the sod turns black
On each circling track,
Where a skeleton whirls with a ghost.

The night wind moans
In shuddering tones
Through the gloom of the cypress tree,
While the mad rout raves
Over yawning graves
And the fiddle bow leaps with glee.

So the swift hours fly
Till the reddening sky
Gives warning of daylight near.
Then the first cock crow
Sends them huddling below
To sleep for another year.

The composition opens weirdly with the hollow strokes of the hour. There is a light, staccato passage suggesting the spectres tiptoeing from their graves to take their

THE PIANOLIST

places in the fantastic circle. Then comes one of the most strikingly realistic passages in the composition—Death attempting to tune up his fiddle, an effect that is repeated at intervals throughout the composition. After reading the poem, the Pianolist will not require a detailed description of the work. He will recognize the details even to the moaning of the night wind and the crowing of the cock, the scurry of the spectres and their final wail, as the grave closes upon them for another year.

V. AN "OPEN SESAME" TO CHOPIN

THE goal of all pianists is Chopin. As the list of one hundred favorite compositions for the Pianola includes no less than twenty-six works by this composer, he would seem to be the goal of the Pianolist as well.

Chopin now is recognized universally as one of the great composers. But during his lifetime he was much criticised, called morbid and effeminate and a composer of small ideas because he wrote almost entirely in the smaller forms. As if size had anything to do with the beauty of a work. In every art the best work of each great man should be ranked with the best of all other great men. Some geniuses express themselves on a larger, but not necessarily on a greater scale, than others. In poetry, for example, Poe's "Raven" is not to be ranked below Milton's "Paradise Lost" be-

THE PIANOLIST

cause shorter; nor in music need a Chopin ballad be placed below a Beethoven symphony because not so extended as the latter. Every genius, however, must expect to be condemned until Time silences criticism of his work. For ever since men began to create rare and beautiful things, there have been other men who, having failed therein, have found a bitter consolation in sitting in crabbed and ill-tempered judgment upon their successful betters.

Another point raised against Chopin was, that practically he confined himself to composing for pianoforte. A sufficient answer to this is, that his music made the pianoforte what it is. For he was the first composer who appreciated the genius of the instrument, discovered its latent tone colors and developed its resources to their full capacity for artistic beauty and expression. Chopin was the first to make the pianoforte

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

both shimmer and sing. Rubinstein said that the art of music could go no further than Chopin and called him the pianoforte bard, rhapsodist, mind and soul. “How he wrote for it I do not know, but only an entire passing over of one into the other could call such music into life.” George Sand (Mme. Dudevant) the famous French authoress with whom Chopin had a love affair that was one of the tragedies of his life, said that “he made the instrument speak the language of the infinite. He did not need the great material methods of the orchestra to find expression for his genius. Neither saxophone nor ophicleide was necessary for him to fill the soul with awe. Without church organ or human voice he inspired faith and enthusiasm.”

Although Chopin figures on almost every pianoforte recital program the average amateur has comparatively slight knowledge of

THE PIANOLIST

the range of his genius. Only the player able to go over his works in person can acquire such knowledge, and the number of amateurs possessed of sufficient technique to play Chopin's music is very small. "But to-day," writes Mr. Ashton Johnson in his "Hand-Book to Chopin's Works," "owing to the invention of the Pianola and the fact that all Chopin's works, including even the least important of the posthumous compositions, are now available for that instrument, the whole domain of his music is, for the first time, open to all. Those who wish may pass the portal hitherto guarded by the dragon of technique and roam at will in his entrancing music land."

Chopin was a native of Poland. He was born near Warsaw in 1810. When the Poles lost their country it was as if their grief and the melancholy of their exile found expression through Chopin's music. He

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

became the musical poet of an exiled race. The most significant years of his life he spent in Paris surrounded by the aristocracy of his own country, who yet had no country, and by the aristocrats of art. Liszt, Heine, Meyerbeer, Bellini and other famous men, as well as famous women, were his personal friends.

The affair with George Sand left on his music the imprint of sorrow, poignant grief, and a pathos reaching down into the depths of tragedy. Different in character was his idealization of the beautiful Countess Delphine Potocka. The episode is fully set forth in my “Loves of the Great Composers.” One of Chopin’s favorite musical amusements, when a guest in the house of intimate friends, was to play on the piano-forte “musical portraits” of the company. One evening in the salon of Delphine’s mother, he played the portraits of the two

THE PIANOLIST

daughters of the house. When it came to Delphine he gently drew her light shawl from her shoulders, and then played through it, his fingers, with every tone they produced, coming in touch with the gossamer like fabric, still warmed and hallowed for him from its contact with her. It was Delphine who soothed his last hours by singing for him as he lay upon his death bed.

She was one of the very few people to whom he dedicated more than one of his works. Both his second concerto (in F minor, Op. 21) and his most familiar waltz, the Op. 64, No. 1, bear her name. Chopin as a pianist, showed decided preference for the slow movement of the concerto, a movement which is of almost ideal perfection, "now radiant with light and anon full of tender pathos," to quote from Liszt. It is indeed, an exquisite idyll, beautifully melodious and replete with delicate ornamentation. Be-

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

cause of its beauty and its association with Delphine, I would suggest that the Pianolist begin with this larghetto. There is another reason for the suggestion. In its ornamentation it illustrates to perfection that characteristic of Chopin's music known as the “tempo rubato.” Much of Chopin's music has in addition to inspired melody, an iridescence as if produced by cascades of jewels. These are ornamental notes which yet are not ornamental in the limited meaning of the word; for in spite of all their light and shade and their play of changeable colors, they form part of the great undercurrent of melody. There are various technical definitions of tempo rubato, but Liszt described it poetically and yet exactly when he said, “You see that tree? Its leaves move to and fro in the wind and follow the gentlest motion of the air; but its trunk stands there immovable in its form.” Or the effect might

THE PIANOLIST

be compared with the myriad shafts from the facets of a jewel, vibrating brilliance in all directions, while the jewel itself remains immovable, the center of its own rays. These effects readily are discoverable in the *largetto* of the Potocka concerto.

The Pianolist should then take up the waltzes of Chopin beginning with Op. 64, No. 1, like the concerto, dedicated to Delphine. This is the most familiar of all the Chopin waltzes, so familiar that it frequently is referred to in a derogatory way as hackneyed. Yet, when properly played, it is one of the most effective of his compositions in this genre. Of the Chopin waltzes in general, it should first be said that they are not dance-tunes but expressions, alternately brilliant, charming and sad, of the intimacy of the ballroom, and that they possess an innate grace which no other composer has been able to impart to the form. They

“ OPEN SESAME ” TO CHOPIN

have been characterized as salon music of the noblest kind and were well described by Schumann when he said that if they were played for dances, half the ladies present should be countesses—which exactly hits off the distinguished quality of these valse. To play them is like looking at a dance through a fairy lens; they seem like improvizations of a musician during a dance and to reflect the thoughts and feelings that arise as he looks on, playing the waltz rhythm with the left hand, while the melody and the ornamental note groups indicate his fancy—love, a jealous plaint, joy, ecstasy and the tender whisperings of enamored couples as they glide past.

“ Gliding ” is the word that has been applied to the smooth brilliance of the Potocka valse. There runs a story regarding this composition that George Sand had a little dog that used to chase its own tail around

THE PIANOLIST

in a circle, and that one evening, she said to Chopin, "If I had your talent, I would improvise a valse for that dog," whereupon the composer promptly seated himself at the pianoforte and dashed off this fascinating little improvisation. It is Parisian in its grace and coquetry and ends with a rapid run, the last note of which is like the rhythmic tap of the foot with which a dainty ballet dancer might conclude a lightly executed *pas*.

In striking contrast to this is the "Valse," Op. 34, No. 2. This is in a minor key and instead of representing the abandon of the dance, it seems rather to depict a melancholy lover allowing his eyes to travel slowly around the ballroom in a futile search of his heart's desire. The prevailing tone of the composition rather is that of an elegy—the burial of fond hopes. Stephen Heller, pianist and composer, tells of meeting

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

Chopin in the store of a Paris music publisher. Heller had come in to order all the vales. Thereupon Chopin asked him which he liked best, and when Heller mentioned this sad one in slow time, Chopin exclaimed, “I am glad you like that one, for it also is my favorite,” and he invited Heller to have luncheon with him.

Perhaps the most brilliant and extended of the vales is Op. 42. In this Chopin imposes upon the triple waltz time, a melody that is in double time—that is, while you count “one, two, three” for the accompaniment, “one, two” will suffice for the melody above it. The effect of this device has been described as indicative in this waltz of the loving, nestling and tender embracing of the dancing couples. It is followed in the music by sweeping motions free and graceful like those of birds. The prolonged trill with which the piece begins, seems to sum-

THE PIANOLIST

mon the dancers to the ballroom, while the waltz itself, is an intermingling of coquetry, hesitation and avowal, with a closing passage that is like an echo of the evening's events.

These three waltzes, if played in the order in which I have mentioned them, make a capital valse suite, and another could be made by taking in the following order, the dashing "Posthumous Waltz" in E minor, the C minor, Op. 64, No. 2, with its veiled, sad beauty; and the brilliant Op. 34, No. 1.

In his "Nocturnes" those sombre poems of night, Chopin seems weaving his own shroud. But if, like Robert Louis Stevenson, Chopin loved the darkness and its melancholy murmuring, and if there was a touch of morbidity in his nature, yet, like Stevenson, he had in him a strain of chivalry. Mr. Huneker, therefore, in his book on Chopin, is quite right when he says of the nocturnes that if they were played with

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

more vigor, a quickening of the time pulse and a less languishing touch, they would be rescued from a surplus of lush sentiment.

Undoubtedly, the most popular of the nocturnes is the one in E flat, Op. 9, No. 2. In fact it is so popular that when any one is asked to play “Chopin’s Nocturne,” this one is meant. Because it is popular, it is sneered at by some critics, but it possesses a lyric beauty quite its own and “sometimes surprises even the weary teacher with a waft of unexpected freshness, like the fleeting odor from an old and much used school book in which violets have been pressed.” A sustained love song, it ends with a cadence that should be played with a rippling delicacy suggestive of moonlight on a lake in the garden of an old chateau.

There are nocturnes of Chopin’s composed on a larger scale than the Opus 37, No. 2, but to my taste there is none more beautiful.

THE PIANOLIST

It bears a striking resemblance to a passage in George Sand's diary describing a voyage with Chopin to the island of Majorca. "The night was warm and dark, illumined only by an extraordinary phosphorescence in the wake of the ship; everybody was asleep on board except the steersman, who, in order to keep himself awake, sang all night, but in a voice so soft and so subdued that one might have thought he feared to arouse the men of the watch. We did not weary of listening to him, for his singing was of the strangest kind. He observed a rhythm and modulation totally different from those we are accustomed to, and seemed to allow his voice to go at random, like the smoke of the vessel carried away and swayed by the breeze. It was a reverie rather than a song, a kind of careless floating of the voice, with which the mind had little to do, but which kept time

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

with the swaying of the ship and the faint lapping of the dark water, and resembled a vague improvization restrained, nevertheless, by sweet and monotonous forms.”

How suggestive this is of the nocturne! The undulating accompaniment, the scintillation of the treble, suggests the gliding, gently rocking motion of the vessel and the phosphorescence in its wake; while the second theme of the nocturne would, even without any suggestion from the passage in George Sand's diary, be taken for a barcarolle, a reverie sung at night, now rising, now dying away, but with the pulse of a musical poet throbbing through every note—the most beautiful melody, I think, Chopin ever wrote.

And speaking of this melody as an improvization, reminds me of those other improvizations by Chopin, the “Impromptus,” in which he has displayed his genius as

THE PIANOLIST

convincingly as in any of his other works. They are fresh and untrammelled in their development, and as full of sunlight as the nocturnes are of darkness. The one in A flat major was dedicated to the Countess de Loban as a wedding present, and was a farewell to her as a pupil. Brilliant, joyous and iridescent in its opening and closing sections, that in the middle voices vague and tender regret. The composition sometimes is spoken of as the "Trilby" impromptu. It is the one Du Maurier made Trilby sing under the hypnotic influence of Svengali.

Had Chopin's directions for the destruction of certain of his manuscripts after his death been carried out, the world would be the poorer by the loss of his "Fantaisie Impromptu," published as Op. 66. It is difficult to understand why he should have wanted this work destroyed, since it produces a sinuous, interwoven, flowing effect, inter-

“ OPEN SESAME ” TO CHOPIN

rupted by a middle melody of much sentiment and beauty. It has been very well described by Mr. Perry in a brief poem entitled “ The Fantaisie Impromptu ”:

The sigh of June through the swaying trees,
The scent of the rose, new blown, on the breeze,
The sound of waves on a distant strand,
The shadows falling on sea and land;
 All these are found
 In this stream of sound,
This murmuring, mystical, minor strain.

And stars that glimmer in misty skies,
Like tears that shimmer in sorrowing eyes,
And the throb of a heart that beats in tune
With tender regrets of a happier June,
 When life was new
 And love was true,
And the soul was a stranger to sorrow and pain.

A reading of this poem conveys to the player the correct mood in which to interpret the impromptu.

THE PIANOLIST

By way of contrast I follow these careless raptures—careless only in their effect of spontaneity—with the famous “*Marche Funèbre*,” the funeral march which forms the third movement of Chopin’s sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35. This has been called the best funeral march ever written for the pianoforte. At Chopin’s own funeral it was played scored for orchestra. In my opinion it is not only “the best funeral march ever written for the pianoforte,” but the most intrinsically beautiful and sad funeral march ever composed. Its opening suggests the solemn tolling of great bells, the heavy march rhythm gives the effect of the slow procession of mourners; and the dirgelike music, soft and muffled at first, grows in power like the measured, inflexible rhythm of fate. Then it seems as if the mourners had arrived at the open grave, for the music voices a weeping melody, pure and tender

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

and sweet; then the march rhythm makes itself heard again and the procession leaves the grave, the music dying away in the distance. This is the funeral march of a nation, of Chopin's own beloved Poland.

Chopin wrote two sets of twelve “Etudes.” They gave an entirely new significance to the term. For the Chopin etudes not only are supreme as studies. They are supreme as music as well. Before they were published the usual musical study was something very dry and set. How different these superb compositions are from studies such as are comprised in Czerny's “School of Velocity,” which make you feel like employing the “velocity” you have acquired to run away as quickly as possible from the “school,” whereas the Chopin etudes are so full of melody and of the rarest and the most beautiful musical effects, that to play any one of them suffices to whet the appetite

THE PIANOLIST

for the others. The Pianolist might well go through the entire two sets of twelve. It would open up a new musical world to him. Here I can only point out three. Opus 10, No. 5, is the "Black Key" etude, so called because all the notes of the right hand are on black keys. This is a brilliant study with a very charming ending. Opus 25, No. 9, is the so called "Butterfly Wings" etude, a designation which expresses its general characteristic of lightness and grace, but fails to make allowance for the accent of passion in the rising and descending passage that occurs about the middle and which should be brought out when it is correctly interpreted—which usually it is not. The greatest of all the etudes is the "Revolutionary," Op. 10, No. 12. It was written by Chopin in 1831, when he heard the news that Warsaw had been taken by the Russians, and it expresses the tornado of emotion that

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

swept over him when he realized that Poland was about to sink beneath the triple onslaught of Russia, Austria and Germany. This composition which, mind you, goes by the simple name of “study,” is one of the most tremendous outbursts of wrath in music—a storm of the soul without even such lyric episodes as those which form islands of calm in the torrential last movement of Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata.” Well may Mr. Huneker say that the end “rings out like the crack of creation. It is elemental.”

This etude, certain of the “Polonaises,” the “Scherzos,” the “Ballades” and the “Fantaisie” in F minor, reveal a fire, passion and virile power that will surprise those who have formed their estimate of Chopin from the mournful nocturnes and brilliant waltzes. The so-called “Military Polonaise,” Op. 40, No. 1, is so replete with the

THE PIANOLIST

spirit of war that in the middle portion it is easy to hear the roll of drums and the clash of battle. It was of this polonaise Chopin said, "If I had the strength to play it as it should be played I would break all the strings of the pianoforte."

The most effective of the polonaises, his opus 53, also breathes forth martial ardor and defiance. It begins with a stirring call to arms, followed by the swinging measure of the polonaise proper with a melody that suggests soldiery on prancing steeds and with flashing sabres, defiling in review before battle. This is followed by a "trio" in which a rapid octave figure in the bass, beginning softly and growing louder and louder until it reaches a crashing climax, with strains like a bugle call ringing out above it, depicts a cavalry charge coming from the distance, drawing nearer and nearer and sweeping past with a mighty roar.

“OPEN SESAME” TO CHOPIN

There is a story that while Chopin was composing this polonaise, he was so affected when playing over the nearly completed work, that, seized by a peculiar hallucination, he saw the walls of the room open and, approaching from the outer night, a band of medieval Polish knights mounted and in armor, as if they had risen from their ancient graves and ridden on the clouds to appear in response to the summons of his music. The somewhat vague passage which follows the climax of the cavalry charge and leads back to the main subject possibly may be accounted for by this strange experience.

Unfortunately there is no opportunity here to take up the “Scherzos,” so unlike the coquettish, bantering pieces of the same name by other composers, Chopin seemingly representing tragedy mocking itself, as any one playing the B flat minor “Scherzo,” Op. 31, may hear for himself; the “Ballades,” so

THE PIANOLIST

eloquently narrative of love and adventure, the A flat major and the G minor being especially popular in the Pianolist's repertory; and the "Fantaisie," in F minor, one of the greatest compositions for pianoforte. As for the "Mazurkas" and "Preludes," pieces that are among their composer's happiest creations, I can do no more than call the Pianolist's attention to their existence and advise him not to neglect them.

VI. NOTES ON SOME OTHER MASTERS

BESIDES those composers, one or more of whose works I have described in some detail, there are others who at least should be touched on, always bearing in mind, however, that one of the aims of this book is to stimulate the Pianolist to explore for himself. Bach, Händel, Haydn and Mozart can be studied most profitably in connection with the courses that are referred to in the chapter on Educational Factors which follows. There too will be found reference to the thorough courses on Wagner, one a general course on that composer, the other a special course on his "Ring of the Nibelung."

A line of composers that may well interest the Pianolist has come to the front in Russia. Rubinstein, whose "Melody" in F and "Kammenoi, Ostrow," No. 17, are among the popular selections in the Piano-

THE PIANOLIST

list's repertory was a Russian, who, however, from a musical standpoint, expressed himself in German. To a certain extent the same is true of Tschaikowsky. His music is "universal" rather than national. It has, nevertheless, the Russian tang to a greater degree than Rubinstein's, and Tschaikowsky is classed correctly as the head of the Russian school and one of the greatest of modern composers. His "Pathetic Symphony," which has been metrostyled by Edouard Colonne, a distinguished French orchestral conductor, is a noble work. Among smaller pieces which the Pianolist readily will appreciate, are the "Song without Words," Op. 2, No. 2; an attractive "Valse à cinq Temps," with its oddly extended rhythm; the very characteristic "November, in the Troika," Op. 37, No. 11; an expressive "Barcarolle" and the selections from his "Casse Noisette" (Nutcracker) ballet suite.

OTHER COMPOSERS

Next to Tschaikowsky's "Song without Words" the most widely known short piece for pianoforte by a Russian composer is Rachmaninoff's "Prelude," Op. 3, No. 2, a broad and sonorous work with a splendid climax. A little "Waltz," Op. 10, No. 2, is captivating; and a "Serenade," Op. 3, No. 5, has an originality and charm quite its own. A very beautiful "Moment Musical," Op. 16, No. 5, does not seem to have been included as yet in the catalogue of music rolls, an honor to which it clearly is entitled. Arensky, Balakirew, César Cui, Glazounow, Karganoff, Liapounow, Rimsky-Korsakow, Sapellnikoff and Taneiew are other interesting figures of the "New-Russian" school of which so much is heard at present.

Dvorak who was a Bohemian wrote much music distinctly and fascinatingly characteristic of his native land. He was, however,

THE PIANOLIST

broad enough in his tastes to recognize, during his sojourn of three years in America, the beauty of the Negro plantation melodies and to compose upon several of these as themes, his symphony "From the New World," sometimes called more briefly the "American Symphony." This symphony, two works of chamber music, also composed during his residence in America, and his compositions in his native Bohemian musical idiom usually are ranked higher than his more cosmopolitan efforts. His "Humoreske," Op. 101, No. 5, the "Slavic Dances" and "On the Holy Mount" are among his compositions unmistakably Bohemian in origin.

While Saint-Saëns, having worked more successfully in the larger orchestral forms, is ranked first among contemporary French composers, and Chaminade leads as a composer of clever salon music, the Pianolist

OTHER COMPOSERS

can add some attractive pieces to his repertory from the compositions of Delibes and Godard. Delibes is the composer of the opera "Lakmé," and the *Airs de Ballet* from this, as well as the selections from his "Coppelia" and "Sylvia" ballets, will be found spontaneous and original. In fact in all instances in which music composed in dance forms has survived, this will be found due to a decided strain of individuality and resulting originality in the composer. The *Valse Lente* from the "Coppelia" ballet is among the hundred most popular pieces in the pianolist's repertory; and well up in the same list is Godard's graceful "Second Mazurka," Op. 54.

Among the most distinguished modern composers is the American, Edward Alexander MacDowell. He is living, but his work is over; for, unfortunately, his mind has given way. His "Scotch Poem" with

THE PIANOLIST

its graphic musical representation of the sea beating against a rockbound coast and its lyric episode consisting of a trist Scotch ballad, is highly dramatic, while his "Sea Pieces" are among the most poetic of contemporary compositions for pianoforte. His "Witches' Dance" is highly descriptive, and in whatever direction the Pianolist may familiarize himself with the music of MacDowell, he will be found a highly original, eloquent and expressive composer, whose fame, already established, is bound to grow with the lapse of time.

This chapter may fittingly be concluded with a brief reference to two great German composers, Schumann and Brahms. Although "popular" is not a word ordinarily associated with Schumann, two of his shorter pieces, "Träumerei" (Revery) and "Warum" (Why) are great favorites. Schumann did much for the development of

OTHER COMPOSERS

music that has a distinct meaning and his works frequently bear titles that are suggestive of some mood or scene, like "At Evening," "Soaring" (Aufschwung, sometimes translated as Excelsior), "Carnaval," a series of twenty-one pieces descriptive of carnival scenes; and the "Novelettes."

Brahms is far more of a melodist than his critics give him credit for, but his clearness of expression is interfered with by the relentless scientific accuracy with which he works out his ideas, to which method he is apt to sacrifice only too often the innate beauty of his thoughts. He seems, however, to be slowly gaining ground, but more through his songs than through his instrumental works excepting those of chamber music. Yet any one who will seriously study Brahms and begin with the shorter pianoforte pieces, Op. 76 and Op. 116-119, will find mines of purest musical gold,

THE PIANOLIST

where, perhaps, he least expected to discover them. Entirely different in style from Brahms' other works are his "Hungarian Dances," in which he has taken dance themes of the Hungarian Gypsies and skillfully worked them up into pieces that are melodiously and rhythmically fascinating and unreservedly popular. They are much played by Pianolists.

Let me point out again, here, that, however unsystematic the arrangement of this book may seem to the musical pedant, I have followed a certain sequence—one of my own devising and which seemed to me best adapted to give the Pianolist a bowing acquaintance with some of the great composers that would lead him to wish for a closer intimacy with these and others. What I have kept in mind, and very clearly, is the fact that I am dealing with a player for whom all technical difficulties have been

OTHER COMPOSERS

eliminated by the very instrument on which he plays. The complete control it gives him of all technical resources is what makes the old method of analyzing pieces according to their historical sequence not only unnecessary but futile in a book of this kind. Nevertheless, so perfectly does this instrument adapt itself to all music, that any one who desires to trace up the technical evolution of the art from Bach to the present day, will find it the readiest means for accomplishing his purpose, especially if he uses in conjunction with it the educational courses referred to in the next chapter.

VII. EDUCATIONAL FACTORS.

IT is not overstating the case to say that the Pianola is the first practical means ever devised in history through which people in general, whether they have had previous instruction in music or not, can become familiar with the world's best musical compositions. Not only can they familiarize themselves with the past, they are able to keep up with the present. For example, many of Richard Strauss's works, including selections from "Salome," are to be found on the rolls prepared for this modern instrument. In fact every new composer whose work has any significance is represented in the catalogue of music rolls. Supposing a Pianolist is planning to attend an opera or a concert. It would have to be a very peculiar opera or a very peculiar concert program which he could not obtain and try over beforehand. Needless to say that, by trying it over beforehand, his ap-

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

preciation of the performance would be increased a thousandfold.

Singers who cannot accompany themselves on the pianoforte, will find this new instrument a boon. For there is a special list of accompaniments in which the principal works in the vocalist's repertory are represented. Lovers of chamber music in which the pianoforte figures, will find pieces like sonatas for pianoforte and violin or violoncello, trios for pianoforte, violin and violoncello, pianoforte quartets, quintets and similar works, arranged so that the Pianolist can play the pianoforte part. "This is the first time I ever have heard every note of the pianoforte part of the Schumann quintet," said the first violinist of a well known string quartet to Mr. F. L. Young, a professional Pianolist, after a performance of this famous work with Mr. Young at the Pianola.

The importance of the educational value

THE PIANOLIST

of this new instrument is recognized by many of the leading educators in music. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, the University of California, the University of Michigan, Vassar and many other institutions of learning use the instrument in connection with their musical courses. At Harvard, in connection with the lectures on music, the students are not only allowed but encouraged to go in groups of six or eight to the hall in which the instruments are installed, and play for themselves the symphonies of Beethoven, the music dramas of Wagner and other music that has formed the subjects of the lectures. "As a self-educator," writes Henry T. Finck, "this instrument is worth more than all other instruments combined, for the reason that any one can, without practice, play on it any piece ever written."

Under the editorship of Carroll Brent Chilton, assisted by a staff of musicians and

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

writers on music, among them Paul Morgan and Edward Ziegler, thorough educational courses for Pianolists have been devised. The courses collectively are known as "The New Musical Education," and are conducted in connection with the Music-Lovers Library of music rolls. These courses are admirably arranged. There is a "Popular Course on the Great Composers" with a supplementary one on the "Modern Great Composers." The former is divided into five lessons: Bach and Händel; Haydn and Mozart; Beethoven and Schubert; Schumann and Mendelssohn; and Chopin and Wagner. The course on the modern great composers also is divided into five lessons: Liszt and Wagner; Chopin and Brahms; Tschaiikowsky, Dvorak and Paderewski; Saint-Säens, Moskowszki and Chaminade; and Grieg and MacDowell, the last named the most distinguished among American composers.

THE PIANOLIST

Care has been taken in arranging these two courses not to aim above the head of the musical novice. For example, in dealing with Bach and Händel, two of their lighter pieces are taken up and analyzed. Biographical data are given and, in addition to the pieces that are analyzed, supplementary rolls of seven compositions by Bach and five compositions by Händel are given, together with lists of reference books. The other lessons in these two courses are planned in the same popular style. They give the Pianolist a bird's-eye-view of music and its development from Bach to Wagner.

The "New Musical Education" also takes up the great composers separately and gives most thorough-going courses on them. The Beethoven course, for example, is arranged in twelve lessons. The course furnishes the student with the Beethoven biography by Crowest; with twelve "lesson

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

pamphlets," each pamphlet relating to a division of the course and written by Thomas Whitney Surette; with twelve scores, orchestral and pianoforte; and sixty-two "educational" music rolls. The scores correspond with the twelve works discussed in the twelve lessons, each lesson being devoted to the analysis of one composition. The rolls include not only those which give the works complete, but also special rolls with music quotations illustrating the points made in the lesson pamphlets. The various musical forms employed by Beethoven are explained and analyzed, and in the complete rolls the different sections characteristic of each form are clearly indicated in print, so that the student, having read the analysis, can follow it intelligently on the roll. There are many other practical details of this kind in all the courses and which go to enhance their value to the Pianolist-student.

THE PIANOLIST

There are two splendid Wagner courses to which I direct special attention because of the frequent performances of his works in opera and concert, and because a comprehensive knowledge of the development of his theories adds so greatly to the enjoyment of his music. The first course begins with his early opera "Rienzi" and ends with "Parsifal." All his works for the stage are embraced in this course which consists of ten lessons, each lesson having, in addition to the ordinary rolls, a "quotation roll," illustrating the points in the lesson pamphlets, and in the case of the music-dramas, giving the "leading motives," so that the student can familiarize himself with these, and with their significance in the drama, and readily recognize them when he hears them, while playing the complete rolls or at a performance.

The second Wagner course relates to the

EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

“Ring of the Nibelung.” It takes up consecutively the four great divisions of the work, “Rhinegold,” “The Valkyr,” “Siegfried” and “Dusk of the Gods,” devoting a lesson to each. Each lesson contains a quotation roll of leading motives and the following examples from the scores:—Lesson I., “Rhinegold.” Prelude and scene of the Rhine-Maidens, Loge’s Narrative, and the finale of the work. Lesson II., “The Valkyr.” Siegmund’s Love Song, Ride of the Valkyries, and the Magic Fire Spell. Lesson III., “Siegfried.” Forge Song, Siegfried and the Forest Bird, Siegfried and Brünnhilde. Lesson IV., “Dusk of the Gods.” Siegfried’s Rhine Journey, Song of the Rhine-Maidens, Siegfried’s Funeral March. I know from the experience of one of my Pianolist friends, how admirable this course is. He took it before hearing the “Ring” for the first time, with the

THE PIANOLIST

result that he knew the music and the names of all the leading motives, recognized them whenever they occurred in the score, and in consequence, enjoyed the performance as much as if he had become familiar with it through repeated hearings. I may add that the catalogue of music rolls contains a complete collection of Wagner's works, making the music of this composer accessible to the Pianolist whether he wishes to play it for study or enjoyment.

The Pianolist holds in his hand the future of the development of music in this country. The instrument on which he plays is the only practical means as yet devised of making the great masterpieces of music penetrate to the minds and hearts of the masses. Art has to advance on its own shoulders. "I cannot rest contentedly on the past, I cannot take a step forward without its aid." The Pianolist has both the past and present of music at his command.

VIII. A FEW "DON'TS" FOR PIANOLISTS.

BY way of postscript I give here a few hints to Pianolists. General directions on how to play the Pianola are provided in pamphlets and circulars which can be obtained without charge, and I do not propose to traverse these. The instrument is capable of great brilliancy and great power, greater than lie in the ten fingers of any pianist. This very fact is what has caused the instrument to be called "mechanical." But in reality it is the fault of the player, because, carried away by the capacity of the instrument, he is apt in the beginning to play too loudly and too brilliantly. One of the first don'ts for the Pianolist is that he refrain from putting the instrument to the full test of its—not really mechanical but superhuman—capacity for brilliancy and power.

Indeed, not only the beginner, but all

THE PIANOLIST

Pianolists should bear in mind that the chief distinction of the instrument lies in its exceeding delicacy. No virtuoso can play as delicately and lightly and, at the same time, as distinctly as can the Pianolist those rapid pianissimo runs and those exquisite trceries and ornamentations which are found in modern music; all of which does not mean that the Pianolist never should play loudly and brilliantly, but that he should not allow himself to be carried away by the possibilities of the instrument in these directions.

Certain refinements of interpretation which the pianist long has made his own also should be observed. Don't start a trill and keep it up with an evenly sustained strength of tone and rapidity from beginning to end. Begin it a shade slower and a shade more softly than the tempo and dynamic signs indicate, let it swell and grow

A FEW DON'TS

louder, then taper down, and slightly retard the turn which leads back to the melodic phrase. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, but one which usually it is safe to follow. The Pianolist can execute his trills with a combination of delicacy and clearness that is absolutely unique.

Don't rip off runs as if you were tearing cloth. Come down with decision on the first note, begin somewhat slower than the indicated tempo and then increase the time to the proper acceleration. This is the true virtuoso effect, adopted, no doubt, because on the pianoforte it is easier to execute a run in this manner; and so, however erroneously, it has come to be considered the genuine musical way—showing that even in art we are creatures of habit.

Don't use the sustaining pedal too frequently, not even as frequently as indicated on the rolls. The pedal directions on the

THE PIANOLIST

rolls follow those of the printed sheets too closely. The pianist often is obliged to use the sustaining pedal to hold a note that he cannot keep down because his fingers are otherwise employed. But the music rolls are cut so that every sustained note is held down as long as the composer directs that it should be. Remember too that the term "loud pedal" as applied to the sustaining pedal, as it properly is called, is incorrect. This pedal sustains but does not increase the power of the sound that is produced. That effect is secured by a stronger pressure of the feet upon the pumping pedals. In fact by varying the degree of pressure of the feet on the pumping pedals the Pianolist can vary the degree of sound from a whispered pianissimo to the strongest fortissimo.

The Pianolist should remember that, as the instrument on which he plays relieves him of all burdens of technique and enables

A FEW DON'TS

him to play anything, no matter how difficult, with absolute technical accuracy, it is all the more his duty to play with as much inner nature. Emotion, the power of expression as he can call forth from his pression, the art of interpretation, can be developed by practice as well as any other latent capacity. It is an excellent plan for the beginner to take one piece, the Nevin waltz that I have described, for example, and play it over many times, not necessarily at the same sitting, in fact better not; but without attempting anything else. Each time let the Pianolist try to get more meaning, more expression out of it than he did before. He will find, if he does this, that, when he takes up another composition, the expression, the art of interpretation, will come to him more naturally and more quickly, until, from an ignorant beginner, he soon will have developed into a musical

THE PIANOLIST

artist who can give himself and hundreds of others the most exalted pleasure—that of listening to music, not to mere playing.





UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

NOV 8 1950'

~~DEC 3 1963~~

QUARTER 19

APR 07 2003

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 431 305 2

MUSIC
LIBRARY
MT
700
K79p
1912

Uni
S