

GERMANY WORSHIPS THE "ALMIGHTY PFENNIG" SAYS DAMROSCH

"I Want to Hear No Longer of American Desire for the Almighty Dollar" Declares Conductor, In Discussion of Musical Conditions Here and Abroad—An Estimate of Richard Strauss's Music—France Working Along Most Promising Lines in Orchestral Music

IF on entering the home of a well-known musician some afternoon your ear were entranced by soft secondary harmonies, altered after the approved manner of Gallic modernity gently played upon the piano, would you conclude that the musician is an avowed Debussyste? Or would you be broader and call him a satellite of modern France? In either case you would not be far from right were the house you were entering the abode of Walter Damrosch, dean of American orchestral conductors. For this is precisely what greeted a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA one day last week when he was waiting in the anteroom for the noted conductor to receive him.

The music stops and the conductor of the Symphony Society advances to meet you. He is not alone, as presently he will present you to a gifted young Bohemian composer, who has made his home in New York in recent years. This is Victor Kolar, one of the first violins in his orchestra. Mr. Damrosch has announced this musician's orchestral Suite "Americana" for production this season and together they have been reading over the big score at the piano. Musically Mr. Damrosch has been called "Wagnerite" time and again. But he has also some Liszt in his makeup, not necessarily musically, strictly speaking, but let us say humanely. For quite as the great Abbé-pianist gave generously of his time and assistance to young and little known composers, to cite cases, the gifted and still unprized Hermann Goetz and the great Wagner, so has Conductor Damrosch given unstintingly to talented musicians in this country throughout his career. Mr. Kolar's Symphonic Poem "Hiawatha" and his "A Fairy Tale," both orchestral works, have been brought to a hearing under his baton with the result that during the past year the young composer has finished this "Americana," a suite in four movements, depicting characteristics in the life of America's North, West, South and East.

Shortly before the much-admired conductor arrived from Europe this Fall an item appeared in the daily prints in which he was quoted as having stated that American orchestras surpass all others. On this subject he went on to say: "Why should not America have the best orchestras? Here we engage men for our orchestras on their merit and on merit alone. Abroad the matter of nationality enters into the choice of men. The important German opera and symphonic organizations will not have a French flute or oboe in their ensemble for purely national reasons. And vice versa. To my mind the French woodwind is the finest to be had in the world to-day, and that is why I have them in my orchestra. Why! The count was once taken in my orchestra and I found that we had thirteen nationalities represented among the players. Such a thing would be impossible in Germany!"

Found Romance in Italy

The trip abroad during the Summer just past was the first real vacation Mr. Damrosch has had in fifteen years. Eight weeks of it were spent in southern Italy, visiting Naples, Pompeii, driving to Salerno, Sorrento and numerous other places thereabouts. "Truly Italy seems to be the only country where at this late day there is any 'romance' left. The wonderful Italian garden above Amalfi impressed me again, that garden which Wagner claimed to be the verification of *Klingsor's* magic garden in his 'Parsifal.' I roamed about in the museums and in the old shops, where one can find marvelous things, if one takes the time to look for them. See, there is a mirror which I picked up, in Italy, with those beautiful cherub heads carved by hand years and years ago. And there is another piece, too."

But Germany has changed. That is the Germany, Mr. Damrosch will tell you, in which he was born and which he was brought up to love and revere. "The Germany of Beethoven, Mozart, Goethe and Schiller is no longer," the conductor continued, "it is all changed. I want to hear no longer of America's worship of the almighty dollar, for in Germany to-day it is the worship of the Almighty Pfennig. The Germans are the greatest consumers of

food and drink in the world to-day. And so a great many of their idealistic traits are disappearing. Take the old city of Nuremberg! There, where once one saw nothing but quaint houses, where the atmosphere of 'Die Meistersinger' was virtually in the air, one is now confronted with hundreds of factory chimneys and here and there a survival of the old days, a house or two hidden, back from view, carefully preserved for tourists.

Modern German Art "Hideous"

"And modern German art is actually hideous. I speak of their paintings, sculpture, architecture, as well as of their music. The color schemes are something that it is difficult to believe them sincere about. I can think of it in no other way than to call it a *worship of the ugly*. As to architecture, I believe firmly that the finest modern architecture is to be found right in America to-day. For example, take the new St. Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue."

Mr. Damrosch went to Munich to hear Mozart's early opera "The Elopement from the Seraglio." "Die Entführung aus dem Serail" as the Germans call it, which he had never heard before. "It was sung in the Residenz Theater, where one hundred and fifty years ago Mozart himself had conducted. The theater is small and the orchestra was accordingly reduced. There one gets the true proportions of a Mozart opera, for the music is only effective to-day when the acoustical properties of an auditorium are as they are there. In Æolian



Walter Damrosch, the Eminent Orchestral Conductor and Composer, in His New York Study

Hall you may enjoy a Mozart symphony and in the vast Metropolitan find a Mozart opera tedious. I must praise the work of the conductor, Bruno Walter, who seems to be the legitimate successor of the late Felix Mottl. But what bad singing!

"The *Münchener* do not seem to care much how a singer sings as long as he or she performs with absolute dramatic sincerity. That they demand. They can actually listen to a tenor sing for an hour a quarter tone below pitch and at the conclusion of the performance tell you that he was splendid. I heard a 'Tristan' performance there, too, with our own Olive Fremstad as *Isolde*. (Later I learned that it was the performance which brought forth unfavorable comment from a Munich paper on the great Wagnerian soprano's personation.) The tenor was indescribably bad, sang off key all through the second act. My memory went back to the wonderful performances with Nordica, the two De Reszkes in the days of Grau when I conducted and I asked myself whether it was necessary for me to sit it out just because I had paid for my ticket. I concluded that a good walk through the park to my hotel would do me a great deal more good and so I left after the second act.

A Comparison

"In the matter of a general appreciation much may be said in favor of the Germans, but in perception of technic they are far behind our American audiences. And the *Festspiele* in Munich are carried on in a way that is evidently arranged with one end in view, the obtaining of the money from visiting Americans. Think of their charging six dollars for the Summer performances when about six marks is all they ask in the Winter!"

Paris, Mr. Damrosch found, "tangoing" to a musical accompaniment which interested him little. The Symphonic Tableaux "Thebes" of Ernest Fanelli, Gabriel Pierné's "discovery" last year, he will in-

troduce this season with his orchestra. Not lasting music this, says he, but of historical interest, especially when one thinks of the obscure drum player working out his musical ideas in poverty and anticipating har-

quietly in his study is one of the finest moments in Strauss, too.

"In my experience in conducting I have always found an intense interest in the preparation of the Strauss' orchestral works. It is not unlike putting together the parts of a great Chinese puzzle which lies before you, as you gaze into his masterly scores. But when the orchestra has been thoroughly rehearsed, when everyone knows his part and the work goes well, the interest is over. When I get it before an audience I do not enjoy the music as I do other works. And you will find that after the maze of dissonances has passed, when the effects are over and Strauss becomes simple (and he does in several of his large works) he is generally commonplace. On the other hand the music of Richard

Wagner, much of which has now become classic, springing as it did from a noble impulse, holds the interest all the time. And the public, which is the judge in these matters of a work's lasting on down to posterity, accepts or rejects not consciously but instinctively."

To the query as to whether his opera "Cyrano" would be heard again this Winter the composer of "Cyrano" could only reply that he had been informed that the work had been placed in the Metropolitan's regular repertoire. While the inquiry in regard to his having written another opera brought the characteristic answer, "I have done some work." A. W. K.

A PARIS OPERA WAR?

Messenger and Gailhard Contemplate Opposing National Institution

PARIS, Nov. 4.—Because Premier Louis Barthou failed to reappoint André Messager musical director and make Pedro Gailhard business manager of the Paris Opéra, there is a possibility of an opera war. Messenger and Gailhard have been promised almost unlimited financial support if they decide to set up an opposition opera house.

It is said that the Théâtre des Champs Elysées will be engaged for that purpose and additional credence is placed in the report because Gabriel Astruc has just been obliged to close the house for lack of patronage. It is estimated that he has lost \$600,000 on the enterprise. Astruc himself has some hope that he may be able to reopen with Gailhard as his associate. The latter is a former director of the Paris Opéra.

Carl Jörn, the German tenor, is said to be meeting with much success on his concert tour in South America.

Found "Ariadne" Dull

"Ariadne auf Naxos," Richard Strauss's latest essay in the realm of music-drama, Mr. Damrosch found frankly dull. "He makes mincemeat of Molière," declared the conductor, "the entire incidental music being of a kind wholly unsuited to the comedy. There are the familiar Straussian harmonies, the same style of music which we have come to know as his. He has taken no advantage of the opportunities offered him. The music should of course have been in the manner of such old-time French composers as Lully and Rameau. In the opera itself Strauss has written with no regard for the voice, consequently the vocal parts are totally ineffective. Twenty bars of pure genius strike you as though Strauss could really do great things if he would only try. This is the orchestral music just before the god appears to claim *Ariadne*."

"Der Rosenkavalier" everybody reports is a charming work. I have not heard it. But Strauss never impresses me as having any heart in his music. I can admire and have always admired him, but I cannot love him. To be sure there are things in his symphonic works which I find admirable. "Tod und Verklärung," you ask? Yes, but the poem on which it is based has always been so unsympathetic to me. I think that we should long ago have had done with that kind of thing. The music in the 'Domestica' where the composer, after his day's work, sits himself down