

## COMPOSERS "IN ADVANCE OF THEIR TIME" FIND STAUNCH DEFENDER IN VON ZADORA

Recrimination of What Is Modern an Eternal Folly, Declares American Pianist, Recently Returned from Eighteen Years' Absence Abroad—"We Should Not Listen to Busoni or Schönberg Music with Same Ears Wherewith We Listen to Beethoven"—A Believer in "an Emotional Technic" for Pianists, in Which Hands and Arms Are Not Concerned, but Only the Head and Heart

THE name of Michael von Zadora still falls more or less unfamiliarly on American ears. A few more successes like that which the pianist recently scored when he played César Franck with the Kneisels and it will have achieved the properties of a household word in native music circles. If he has not been more extensively known hereabouts until the present the reason lies in his dislike of flamboyant self-proclamation coupled with an eighteen-years' absence. For Mr. von Zadora, though American born, returned from abroad after this protracted voluntary exile only some two months ago to re-establish himself in what to him has practically become foreign territory. And he is now in charge of the piano department at the New York Institute of Musical Art.

In appearance Mr. von Zadora is as little of the conventional American as in name. He suggests with certain differences a composite of Chopin and Ernest Schelling steeped in a quasi-Byronic atmosphere. A mere glance, at all events, suffices to reveal him as a personage distinctly *à part*, while a casual disclosure of certain ideas and ideals which he professes proves that in personality he is unmistakably so.

There are some artists, reputedly profound, whose intellectual and æsthetic depths can be completely probed and fathomed through the expedient of a half hour's conversation. But the longer one talks with Mr. von Zadora the higher seems the intellectual plane of the man, the more far-reaching and individual his per-

their source and fountain-head. The allotted period offered little more than an opportunity to peer momentarily into the clear depths of the artist's mentality, to become sensible of the originality of its content and to conceive impressions too subtly abstract, perhaps, for familiarly expressed reproduction in black on white.

### The Influence of Busoni

Progressive educational methods are tending more and more decisively away from the set formalism and cold pedantry of the sort sanctioned by the rooted conventions of centuries. Mr. von Zadora, while he has elaborated his individual ideas according to observations and plans of his very own, has reacted considerably to the impulses communicated by that most advanced and radical of musical thinkers, Ferruccio Busoni. There is probably no living-artist for whom he experiences a larger measure of respect, esteem and devotion. The Italian pianist was one of Mr. von Zadora's masters. So was Leschetizky. With the latter, however, he did not remain long nor did he submit as willingly to his more reactionary influences.

"Busoni is a greatly disappointed and a greatly misunderstood and unappreciated man," remarked the pianist. "He has out-distanced his generation and is in advance of his time as is Schönberg and as are several others today. For him there is no rest, there is no cessation of activity. The solution of problems is his self-imposed, never-ceasing duty. And the elucidation of one results merely in the creation of others and more formidable which relentlessly demand his attention.

"We cannot afford to dismiss him or to dismiss Schönberg with lazy inference of their insincerity or aspersions upon their sanity. This music will some day be clear to us—some day when we do not listen to it through the same ears wherewith we listen to Beethoven. It is folly but it is eternal, this recrimination of what is modern! Yet the new has always been judged and temporarily condemned by standards already established, standards that had their legitimate applicability to one age but are out of keeping with the spirit and the needs of the next. What ignorance, this incessant parroting about the degeneracy of the age and of art. Art does not degenerate and it does not renew itself by reversion to the past. Nothing turns back. Life in the larger sense can be maintained only by a forward march.

"And so it is futile to block the onward trend of art, however strange it may seem. There has been much clamor in various quarters because of the contentions of those who are demanding smaller intervals than the conventional semitones in music. And yet the feeling has planted itself strongly in many minds. In Germany today there is much experimentation with quarter-tone instruments. I possess one of these myself. The gradual evolution of such an idea will entail new and unthought-of developments and changes in musical notation and the construction of instruments. And why not? Is there anything that binds us to retain them intact as they now are? The piano, I feel sure, is susceptible of mighty transformations.

"There are among musicians, I know, an untold number who will repudiate such ideas as fast as they hear them. They follow a path of least resistance and it is much easier to dismiss a new idea contemptuously than to reason out its validity, especially if it leads us into alien fields of thought. But how many musicians do you find who will sit down and really

I give the composition I am to play careful study away from the piano with a view of ascertaining the details of its structure and

and enjoyment of sweet little girls and boys. My preference is for something calling for a more sustained effort.

### Americans Liberal-Minded

"I have not yet become acclimated in America. My long sojourn in Europe where I studied, taught and played, has made me feel a stranger in my own country especially as the places and people I used to know here are so changed in all respects. But what has struck me has been the liberal-minded attitude of the American critics towards music of the newer type. Do you think those in Germany would accept César Franck as open-heartedly as they have all done here? No indeed! They would fume, fret and split



Michael von Zadora, Distinguished American Pianist and Head of the Piano Department of the Institute of Musical Art of New York



A Caricature of Von Zadora by His Friend and Teacher, Ferruccio Busoni

ceptions, the more comprehensive his outlook on vital issues and problems of art. To the small-minded or conventionalized musician it is readily conceivable that his ideas should seem iconoclastic. To the liberally disposed his theories and their pertinent deductions are at once stimulating and refreshing—sign-posts, as it were, to misty regions of unexplored and often undreamed-of possibilities.

All of which does not purport to imply that principles of novel trend and weighty account are to be found exploited in the bounds of the present brief notice. Mr. von Zadora accorded a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA something like a half-hour's conversation after his last class at the Institute late one afternoon last week. Leisure did not serve the purpose of expounding pregnantly suggestive theories at length or of pursuing them, so to speak, to

character. If I have this in my mind my fingers obey me without my having to think of them as independent agents. Formerly I could not play if my hands were cold. I have overcome that difficulty by giving thought, not to my fingers but to the music they are playing. It is this principle with all the extensions it involves that I seek to inculcate into my pupils—an emotional technic, I may say, in which the hands and arms are not concerned, but only the head and heart.

"What is the use in playing a difficult passage over and over again to conquer its difficulties when by observing it carefully, noting the peculiar details which trouble the player and bearing them in mind they can be overridden with so much greater certainty?"

hairs over its 'want of melody' or 'lack of form.'" H. F. P.

### Permanent Home for Philadelphia Orchestra Proposed

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 15.—It is reported that a movement is on foot to provide a permanent home for the Philadelphia Orchestra. The building of a hall to cost \$750,000 is proposed, to be located, if the present optimistic hopes be realized, somewhere on the new Parkway. Plans and specifications already have been prepared, it is said, the necessary funds being expected to materialize through popular subscription. A. L. T.

### Kingston Signs Three-Year Contract with Aborn

Milton and Sargent Aborn have signed a contract with Morgan Kingston, the tenor of the Century Opera company, whereby he will sing under their direction in America for the next three years. The arrangement was made through Daniel Mayer of London, who represents Mr. Kingston.

### American Prima Donna Suspected in Italy of Being Spy

ROME, Dec. 16.—The American prima donna, Dorothea MacVane, who is now filling an engagement at Taranto, has been under surveillance for some time by Italian authorities who have mistaken her for a spy and the affair has been reported to the American Embassy.

### From the Creed of Michael von Zadora

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The piano, I am sure, is susceptible of mighty transformations.

think? Who, if they do have brains, go to the trouble of using them?"

### Methods of Practise

Mr. von Zadora is not given to extensive practising. "I find no need for it if

On January 20 Mr. von Zadora will give a recital in Æolian Hall. He will play, as he puts it, "various large masterpieces of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt and others." "I do not like playing programs of short pieces," he says, "for the pleasure