

# OLGA SAMAROFF PREPARING TO RESUME CAREER ON THE CONCERT PLATFORM

**Pianist Will Make First Public Appearances Next Season After Two Years' Retirement—One of Her Engagements to Be with Philadelphia Orchestra, Her Husband Conducting—Reminiscences of Her Musical Beginnings—No Handicap to Her to Be an American Artist Playing for American Audiences—Philadelphia as a Musical City**

Bureau of Musical America,  
Sixteenth and Chestnut Streets,  
Philadelphia, December 1, 1913.

"LITTLE did I think," laughingly remarked Mrs. Leopold Stokowski, who is known professionally as Olga Samaroff, the pianist, chatting with the MUSICAL AMERICA representative in her studio, a few days ago, "when I first appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, under Fritz Scheel, in the season of 1906-7, that in a few years I should be living in Philadelphia as the wife of the conductor of that organization." Unexpected, indeed, are the manuevrings of Fate, but often also in the nature of a blessing, and Philadelphia is to be congratulated upon the happy combination of circumstances which brought this charming woman and distinguished artist within its borders as one of its most loyal and enthusiastic citizens.

"Yes," said Mrs. Stokowski, "I love Philadelphia, as I am sure I have reason to do. It is home to me now, and holds my dearest interests. Philadelphia, I have found, is a delightful city to live in. In many ways it is like some of the European cities, as there is not that feverish haste here, that restless spirit and wild scramble that one finds in so many American communities. But it is not 'dead,' by any means. It keeps me just about as busy as I well can be, and at present I am not left a moment to spare. You see, I am to resume my professional career next season and am working hard at my répertoire. Several hours a day I am at the piano. I am getting up a lot of new music, in addition to most of the standard piano pieces.

The pianist has an ideal studio to work in. Originally built as a painter's studio, with broad skylights, it is a long room, appropriately and handsomely fitted up, with the grand piano at one end and long shelves for a profusion of classified music on one side, "comfy"-looking furniture, personally inscribed photographs of many of the celebrities of the musical world, and all the luxurious informality and the artistic atmosphere that one would imagine just such a true woman and real artist as Mrs. Stokowski—or Mme. Olga Samaroff—would require. It is separated by a "bridge" or short hallway, from the main portion of the handsome house at No. 2014 Pine street, in which the Stokowskis live while in Philadelphia. "You see," said Mrs. Stokowski, "no matter how much noise I make my husband cannot hear me and I never disturb him."

For two years since her marriage to the present conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra Mme. Samaroff, to call her hereafter by her professional name, has eschewed piano playing in public and has been entirely a private individual. "And I have been very happy," she declared, enthusiastically. "I have been, and I am—but my art is calling. I want to play again—I must. These two years have been blissfully happy and restful, and they have given me new strength, new inspiration, new enthusiasm. I would advise every artist, if possible, to withdraw from active work for a time and rest. It opens up new and unlimited possibilities. But I have not been idle all this time. Oh, no! I have been studying—improving, I hope, my mind as well as my musical talent. I have been studying into musical literature, not only of the piano, but the history of music in general, the ancient and the new, from the music of old England to the chamber music of the present day. It all reacts most visibly and most decidedly upon one's musical scope and appreciation.

#### As to American Music

"I want to make my new répertoire representative of the best in piano music, no matter of what nation; of every nation, in fact, that has something worthy to offer. In spite of my Russian name I was born in this country and am at heart an ardent



—Photo Haesler.

Olga Samaroff (Mme. Leopold Stokowski) Practicing for Next Season in the Study of Her Home in Philadelphia

American. I shall play American music whenever it seems to me worth playing and appeals to me in the right way, when it arouses that inner enthusiasm which I believe every artist must feel to do his best. But I shall not play any American music just because it was written by an American; nor Russian music because it is Russian, nor any music because it is anything but good music—music that I feel and know I ought to play. A pianist must discriminate and select the music that touches deeply that 'inner enthusiasm' in order to give the work an adequate performance.

"It is different with an orchestral conductor, who, of course, must produce everything of importance in the musical world, whether it particularly appeals to him or not. He is responsible for the musical culture and education of the community in which he is located, and it is his duty to cover the field of good music as completely as possible, and he has at his command the means of doing it. But I believe that the pianist, and every artist, not only has the right, but ought to devote his time and energy to the music that he believes to be great, and for which he feels genuine enthusiasm."

Asked if she were willing to disclose some of the facts relating to her early career and her start to musical fame, Mme. Samaroff smilingly assented. "Why, yes," she said, "and it was quite eventful, too, my beginning. I was born in San Antonio, Texas, and in due course of time faced the necessity of making my living. I thought I had musical talent, went to Europe and for several years studied in Paris and Berlin. I was the first American girl to be admitted to the woman's piano classes of the Paris Conservatoire, and studied there for some time, after which I was with Jedliczka, in Berlin. But at first I had no idea whatever of a professional life, for I had parents and relatives who possessed the old-fashioned prejudice against anything that was related to 'the stage.'

"In 1904, however, being obliged, as I said before, to do something, and still possessed by the consuming desire I had always had for concert work, and having made up my mind to do it, whether or no, I landed with my dear mother in New York City. We were like two innocent babes-in-the-wood, with absolutely no idea

of how to start or what to do. But I had ambition and determination to back me up, and so one day I walked into the office of Mr. Wolfsohn, the musical agent, and told him I wanted to give piano recitals. That well-known man of big musical interests and wide influence looked at me rather despairingly, but courteously asked me for my European press notices. 'I have no press notices,' I replied, 'European or otherwise. I have never played anywhere.' This was too much for him. He could not think of exploiting a young pianist who was absolutely unknown and who had never played anywhere. He advised me to give the whole thing up, to go back to Europe.

"'Why, I have just come from Europe,' I cried. 'I have no money to go back with. I don't want to go back to Europe. I want to give recitals here.' But not a glimmer of hope or encouragement did Mr. Wolfsohn give me. I asked him if he couldn't rent me a grand piano. No, he rented only uprights. 'But,' I said, 'I have to have a grand.' The best I could do was to get a letter of introduction to Mr. Stetson, a member of the Stetson firm, so I went to see him. After much persuasion Mr. Stetson finally said that he would let me have the desired grand, and he was also kind enough to consent to hear me play. I sat down at the piano, and while I was playing, as luck would have it, by mere accident, in came Mr. Wolfsohn. He stood and listened, and when I had finished calmly remarked, 'I guess you'll do. Come and see me again to-morrow.'

#### The First Recital

"The result was that Mr. Wolfsohn arranged a recital for me in Carnegie Hall—my first. Think of it! I don't know how I played that night. In fact, I scarcely knew that I played at all. I was frozen with terror, but I got through with it, and the next morning the critics spared my life. They were about evenly divided as to my merits, but some of them were very kind, and it was a start. It was for that recital that I chose the name of Olga Samaroff. You see, my maiden name was Hickenlooper, and Mr. Wolfsohn flatly refused to present me with the burden of such a cognomen. I thought of my mother's name, but also of the objection that the family would have of seeing that name on the billboards, so I went back and ex-

plored further the different branches of the family tree and finally hit upon the name of my Russian greatgrandmother—who was Olga Samaroff. It was with this name, and under the circumstances I have related, that, on the 18th of January, 1905, I made my first appearance on any stage, in Carnegie Hall, New York City. I soon had an engagement with the New York Symphony Orchestra, and later all of the other prominent orchestras in the country."

As a final question the interviewer inquired: "Have you found that being an American is an obstacle to a career in the United States?"

"No, I have not," replied Mme. Samaroff, with emphasis. "Not at all. As I said before, I am thoroughly an American, notwithstanding the choice of such a foreign-sounding name, and for four seasons played in this country, and, I hope, with success. No, there is nothing in the idea that the American artist cannot succeed in America. And once more let me speak of Philadelphia, the city of my adoption, which has won my affections. I find life here delightful, and I find, too, that the idea that Philadelphia is not a musical city is entirely unfounded. So far as my modest efforts can have any effect I am bound to do all I can to destroy this mistaken impression. The idea is foolish. Philadelphia, indeed, is one of the most musical of cities. I have attended every concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra that my husband has conducted, and have closely watched the audiences. The people here are eager for music, and they are discriminating and know what is good when they hear it."

In addition to the work of preparing her répertoire for next season Mme. Samaroff also has several advanced piano pupils whom she was finally persuaded to accept, also one little boy, whom she believes to be wonderfully talented. In speaking of her forthcoming tour she remarks that her one regret is that it will take her away from her home, to which she is devoted. "But my season, which is to begin next October, will be limited to forty concerts, all of which will be as near Philadelphia as possible. And one of my engagements," she concluded, "will be right here in Philadelphia—as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, under my husband's direction. That will be interesting. Won't it!"

ARTHUR L. TUBBS.