

# AMERICA'S FREEDOM AND OPTIMISM BOUND TO PRODUCE A GREAT MUSICAL ART, DECLARES FELIX WEINGARTNER

We Are Not Merely Materialists, Says Eminent Conductor and Composer Who Has Made a Careful Study of Conditions Here and Who  
 Contends that Our Energy Is Matched by Our Romanticism—The "Great American Composer" Sure To Come—Mme.  
 Weingartner Presents Her Views on Opportunities for Career-Making Here and Abroad

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ONE day last week during a lull between performances Mr. and Mrs. Felix Weingartner talked "shop" and other matters.

Their habitat is not a pretentious one. It is simply and comfortably appointed. It is also a workroom, with a grand piano and a conductor's score, a desk full of correspondence; an orderly room withal, wherein you can lay your hands on what you want, and a good looking tea table in the center.

It is needless to say that Mr. Weingartner is extremely busy during his Boston visit. He has conducted most of the performances since his arrival here.

The round of work that always awaits the musical director is his, but in extra measure. The conversation was interrupted by the necessity of Mr. Weingartner's seizing the only opportunity available to go through some pages of "Faust" with Mr. Muratore.

Joseph Urban, wearing one of the most beautiful smiles which we remember to have seen wreathing his brow, rushed in to throw his arms about the conductor and the conductor's wife, kiss them on both cheeks, German fashion, and otherwise farewell them ere he took the train for New York.

Then, while Mr. Muratore rehearsed, the tea table was rushed into the adjoining room and to the tinkle of the piano in the distance Mme. Weingartner continued the conversation.

So as a matter of direct interest, a burning question which has stirred the readers of MUSICAL AMERICA, we asked her whether she believed conditions in Europe as favorable as the conditions in this country for music study. "That depends on just what you mean," replied Mme. Weingartner. "There is no question that we have in America excellent teachers and musical institutions of all kinds.

"There are just as intelligent and conscientious teachers here as anywhere else, and we all know that finishing work without solid acquirements as a basis for further development is worse than useless. The sooner that fact is realized by the American music student the better for him.

"As to the expense, I do not believe that musical education need be any more expensive, for purposes of real benefit, in Europe than in America. A great teacher of course has a right to charge substantial fees for his services. His experience as a teacher and (as is usually the case) his added experience of the public and of the practical exigencies of the stage are sure to be invaluable. Only years of experience made possible the sound practical preparation which such a master can provide. Whether in Europe or in America, the teacher whose services are the most valuable, and upon whose time there are the greatest demands, must ask a certain remuneration for his work—a self-evident aspect of the case. I may add that the great artist is almost invariably willing to make considerable sacrifices of time and energy whenever he discovers a pupil of genuine talent and ambition. But aside from the prices of lessons, which are expensive here as well as abroad, living in Europe need not be a bit more costly than on this side, and in many cities it is still possible to live comfortably and at a cheaper rate than is charged in the most reputable quarters of most American cities.

## Opportunities Offered Abroad

"The cost of European study, then, deducting the expenses of the trip, need not terrify the student, and there is still—especially for the vocalist—a condition in Europe which does not as yet exist in anything like a similar degree in America. That is—opportunity! In this, and inevitably, Europe is still ahead of us. I will tell you what I mean. How many opera houses are there here in comparison with the number of theaters in France and Germany alone? How many concerts does even such a great city as New York offer its public every evening as compared with the number of concerts in Berlin? How many choral

societies are there in Boston, as compared with the number of choral societies in any one of the great German cities? It is true that America is advancing with amazing rapidity as a musical country, but it is still true that in Europe good music is more of a popular institu-

conditions now permit of the most ambitious student securing a thoroughly solid and modern training in music in his own country, but I think that on account of the present greater prevalence and popular assimilation of good music throughout Europe and the facilities for



Two Eminent Conductors Taking a Stroll in Central Park, New York. Josef Stransky (on the left) and Felix Weingartner

tion, accessible to all the people. The smallest town has its musical organizations. There are hundreds of minor opera companies, orchestras, singing societies. It is also true that such cities as Berlin are thoroughly surfeited with music of all kinds. But the point I want to make is that the extraordinary number and diversity of the performances in Europe in turn necessitate the services of performers.

"There are four or five, are there not, principal opera companies in this country offering openings for artists of standing. There are hundreds of such opportunities in Europe. They will not pay a great deal over there, and many a singer may be thankful for the opportunity to appear on the stage for nothing, but there is the chance, and the perpetual round of performances makes for one of the most valuable elements in the education of the young musician—routine. It is this, and only this, which puts the stamp of finish and authority upon the performances of an artist.

## New Worship of the Musician Abroad

"However talented he or she may be, however intelligent or gifted with personality or any other of the factors which contribute to public success, it is experience and experience only which can make the finished product. And finally—I know it is a hackneyed remark, but I must say that I consider it holds good—there is the 'stimmung,' the 'atmosphere.' It really exists. The public cherishes its music and its musical heroes. To the American it may seem a little sentimental—this prostration before certain idols. The days when men as well as women treasured a piece of clothing or a cigar butt of Franz Liszt are only in degree a thing of the past. The handclasp of a great musician, a casual remark of his, a glimpse in the street—young men who may not even be professional musicians treasure such memories. And I like that. This habitual reverence in turn acts importantly upon the artistic attitude of the young man or woman. Altogether there is not the slightest question in my mind that

musical performances, that the young artist can 'finish' more quickly there than here, gain more experience at the most crucial period of his development, and also profit by the musical 'atmosphere' of an older country."

## Weingartner, the Idealist

Mr. Muratore had departed and Mr. Weingartner returned. No one of the great artists of Germany makes a finer impression at a casual meeting than this man, incontrovertibly a gentleman and an idealist. There is a fineness and a vision in the face which all artists do not possess. It is not only that Weingartner is a composer of note and one of the world's most distinguished conductors. There is something more. One could believe that still, after a brilliant and stormy career, and after half a century's contact with the world, he preserved a belief in humanity, in prevailing truth and sincerity and in the ultimate triumph of right.

This is not the occasion to praise the nobility of conception and the fine enthusiasm that Mr. Weingartner brings to bear upon the music of a Beethoven or a Wagner, or, for that matter, any composer whom he undertakes to interpret to the public, but his later conversation upon the subject of the musical future of this country, which profoundly interests him, and what he conceives to be the desirable direction for future development in the musical art, bore out the incorrigible simplicity and sincerity of his appearance. In the year 1914 this, too, is amazing.

Turning from Mme. Weingartner's summing up of her opinions, the question of America's musical future—the question which America used to put most humbly, but now puts to a European with curiosity rather than eagerness for the reply—was asked her husband: the musical future of America!

## Considers Chicago Our Most Cosmopolitan City

"The question of the musical future of the country," said Mr. Weingartner, "has occupied me a good deal of late. I

have seen five of the biggest cities of the country, and have conducted at these places. In certain cities the conditions differ widely. It is rather singular that Chicago was for me the mostly cosmopolitan, the nearest European in its mood. About all this I have written much in Germany. Have you seen?" To his regret, the interviewer had not seen. "I shall probably write more. It is unquestionable that the freshness of the land itself and its remarkable opportunities for all sorts of development are equaled by the freedom of its creed. I believe that democracy is a very real thing in this country, and this condition cannot fail to influence mightily the artist. Add to this an enormously important factor—the possibilities of making money. At a superficial glance an aspect of materialism, but destined to confer upon the artist a tremendous impetus due to the newly acquired sense of freedom, resource and power. Take these conditions, the energy of the people, their conviction of the possibilities of accomplishment, and you can scarcely fail to develop a great art. I have not found the American a materialist. His energy is matched by his romanticism. The attitude of *laissez faire* is unknown to him. All can be accomplished. He will dare as far as he pleases.

"The pinch of helpless poverty or the necessity of conceding to individuals in power if he wishes to further his projects, are seldom, to him, the problems that they appear to the European without influence. This freedom, this optimism, founded upon actual and enduring conditions, must produce. Since my first American visit I have had opportunities of observing the standards of the operatic and orchestral performances, the general receptiveness of the public, the high standard of criticism as it is encountered in the great cities. The need of this culture extending to districts other than the commercial centers is of course evident, and, I think, as much appreciated by the average American who is observant of these matters as by the visiting European. But the growth is phenomenal. That such an institution, for instance, as the Boston Symphony Orchestra could arise in a matter of some thirty-odd seasons, and under conditions which have changed incredibly since its inception, is really marvelous. I need not speak in detail of this and of similar developments in the opera houses, but I can assure you that as a European musician I should be loth to have missed the opportunities of hearing as well as conducting performances, and whenever my own rehearsals permit I am a listener at the Symphony concerts.

## Birth of the Great American Composer

"As for the 'great composer' of America—who knows where he is, or when he will come? If signs are certainties he will surely come. Who knows where from? There are no factories for geniuses, but suddenly where the soil is propitious the fruit appears. You know as much as I do about the next great American composer!

"And what of the European composers? I am afraid there are no new names. There is Strauss. There is Reger. Others, too, are composing. Schönberg for me is a noise and a bad noise. No one, of course, can judge his time, and as our music of to-day is a little more than two hundred years old we have not much historical perspective. But certain things are rather apparent. For instance, music is no longer such an absolute art—I had almost said so undefined an art—as it was a century ago. And I have a firm faith that we will make, in a certain sense, a return to the principles of Beethoven and other of the Viennese masters. I do not mean a return of manner so much as a revival of the spirit. We would retrograde if we went back to copying Mozart. But there is no danger of that. We never will. At present music appears to me to be in an extreme and exaggerated state, due largely to the overwhelming influence of the music drama. Little could any one of the disciples of Richard Wagner have foreseen the entire results of his triumphant progress. For dramatic purposes he and other composers

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